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**TIMBERTOWN GIRLS: GRETNNA FEMALE
MUNITIONS WORKERS IN WORLD WAR I**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between age, class and gender among female munitions workers at the government explosives factory at Gretna in south-west Scotland during World War I. The Ministry of Munitions not only organised the construction of a factory nine miles in length, but also built two new townships to house a migrant workforce, which was drawn from all parts of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Teenage girls comprised a considerable proportion of this workforce. Significantly, welfare provision at Gretna, both inside and outside the factory, was far more extensive than at many other munitions establishments. This thesis focuses on the relationship between welfare supervisors, women police, social reformers and the female workers. While some middle and upper-class women attempted to claim new areas of social space during World War I, by embracing industrial welfare work or police work, their authority was often defined by their relationship with young, working-class females. Class was important in this relationship. However, welfare workers, for example, not only claimed authority because of their superior social standing, but also because they were often significantly older than much of the female workforce. The thesis concludes that the youthfulness of Gretna munitions workers was a significant component of their wartime identities and experience.

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Abbreviations

CJ - Carlisle Journal

CN - Cumberland News

CRO - Carlisle Record Office

D&GC&H - Dumfries and Galloway Courier and Herald

DA - Dumfries Archive

DL - Dumfries Library

IWM - Imperial War Museum

AO - Annandale Observer

PRO - Public Record Office

WWC - Women's Work Collection

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Introduction

'Nobody will prophesy what will happen to Timber Town when the war is over. The girls all say that when the big guns cease to demand high explosives they are going home. Timber Town may disappear and the girls will scatter, but those who have felt the pulse of patriotism there beating strong and true will not forget the war emergency community, the work they did and the spirit in which they toiled.'¹

The quotation above is taken from a newspaper article written by a Scottish minister who had worked among female munitions workers at the Government explosives factory at Gretna, in the south-west of Scotland, just a few miles from the border with England. Known locally as 'Timber Town,' because many of the workers lived in wooden huts or bungalows, female operatives were brought in not only from the Borders region but from many other parts of Great Britain. Gaelic speakers from the Highlands fishing industry worked alongside daughters of North-East miners and shipbuilders, Lancashire and Yorkshire textile workers and Irish girls, all of them persuaded by an extensive Government recruitment campaign that their efforts would be decisive in winning the war against Germany. At its peak, towards the end of 1917, the Gretna factory employed 19,733 workers - 60% of whom were female. It was, additionally, a young workforce: over 60% were aged under 18 and 80% were single. Those who were married were often skilled male workers, chemists or administrators who brought their families with them.² These skilled workers and their families lived

¹ 'Timber Town: A Happy Community of Girls', C(umberland) N(ews), July 28, 1917.

² P(ublic) R(ecord)O(ffice), Mun 5/100/360/42, Ministry of Munitions Report on Labour in Government Establishments, December 1917. LAB5/1, L13, evidence of David Gilmour to Committee on Women in Industry. November 16, 1918. See Chapter 1 for an analysis of the class, age and gender of the workforce.

in the newly erected houses in the purpose-built townships of Gretna and Eastriggs. Laid out in a simplified version of garden city designs, such developments have been seen as influential in post-war public house building and planning.³ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle described the townships of Gretna and Eastriggs as 'miracle towns' in a syndicated article of 1916, praising the quality of housing and the Herculean efforts involved in constructing a nine-mile length factory in around nine months.⁴ This was indeed an impressive feat, yet it did not tell the whole story. Behind the permanent housing lay rows and rows of temporary wooden hostels and huts, laid out on a military grid. These were the homes for many of the young, single girls, and a clear indication of their status: temporary homes for temporary workers. Contemporaries were under no illusions about the reality of such wartime circumstances. Gretna was 'a wartime emergency community', to use the phrase in the Cumberland News article quoted above. Ministry of Munitions officials, advocates of government intervention in areas such as housing and welfare provision, and voluntary philanthropic organisations were quick to justify such measures as a means of improving working-class lives. At Gretna this meant providing model working conditions, and offering social and recreational facilities for the young workforce. When Lord Guthrie opened the YWCA Institute at Gretna in 1917, he clearly had this educative aspect in his mind. He was 'greatly struck to see the habits that these women were *in some cases forced to learn*, (my italics) and it would be a blessing to them and their future children all their lives.' J.C. Burnham, the Superintendent of the Gretna factory, also thought that female workers subjected to the 'refined conditions of life and the many uplifting influences with which they were surrounded were raised to a far higher social status and were immeasurably better fitted to be citizens and home makers of

³ See S. Pepper and M. Swenarton, 'Home Front: Garden Suburbs for Munitions Workers', Architectural Review 163 (1978), pp. 364-76, for a discussion on Ministry of Munitions housing programmes during the First World War. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of housing provision at Gretna.

⁴ 'Eastriggs and Gretna: The Miracle Towns', A(nnandale) O(bserver), December 1, 1916.

the days to follow'. At Gretna the lives of the female workforce were regulated to a considerable degree, not only at work, but outside the workplace itself. Factory officials considered the welfare of workers as secondary only to the production of cordite.⁵

How did the Ministry of Munitions view such a workforce? It could be argued that the State took on the parental role of fathers or husbands away in the armed forces or of parents living at some distance away. Some parents may well have agreed to let daughters go to Gretna in the knowledge that their lives would be supervised to a considerable degree. Female workers living in such circumstances, however, were still thought to be open to moral dangers given that they were ostensibly free from parental control. Angela Woollacott's work on this topic, for example, emphasises the generational aspect of this concern and the fact that the policing of young girls' behaviour inside and outside the workplace was often performed by policewomen and welfare workers who were normally of an older generation as well as of a higher social status.⁶ Such generational concern is particularly pertinent to the subject of Gretna munitions workers, given that the majority were teenage girls.

The Historical Debate

War as a catalyst for change is a contested topic among historians. The First World War has long been seen as a significant moment in twentieth-century history. Paul Fussell's influential work suggested that the experience of war produced a 'modernist' culture that severely ruptured pre-war 'traditional' meanings of war.⁷ Feminist historians have pointed out that Fussell's interpretation ignores female experiences of

⁵ D(umfries) & G(alloway) C(ourier) & H(erald), March 31, 1917. I(mperial) W(ar) M(useum), W(omen's) W(ork) C(ollection), Mun 14/11, H.M. Factory, Gretna: The Welfare Department.

⁶ A. Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever and Its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 29 (1994).

⁷ P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford), 1975. See also S. Hynes, *A War Imagined: The Great War and English Culture* (1991). For a critique of this position, see J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995).

war, thus marginalising important cultural meanings for women.⁸ Fussell's voices are therefore voices of male memory. They are equally voices of adult memory. The debate surrounding female munitions workers has again largely been centred around the question 'Did the War significantly change women's position in society?' Some, like Arthur Marwick, view the War as having significant social consequences for society, and particularly for women. For example, Dina Copelman sees a change in relations between the sexes and a move towards the idea of companionate marriages from the 1920s.⁹ Fifty years earlier Mary Chadwick saw the War as a particularly momentous period when the adolescent girl 'left the schoolroom and became responsible and useful beyond her years and in countless directions'. After 1918 young women were not prepared to return to pre-war conditions. Indeed, Chadwick confidently proclaimed: 'The world had changed beyond all possibility of returnIt is the country of the young'.¹⁰ Clearly, the idea of the First World War as a watershed has retained significant cultural currency throughout much of the twentieth century.

The arguments of the 'optimists', however, have not gone unchallenged. Gail Braybon's pioneering work on female workers notably questioned the idea of the war as a liberating force for women, particularly in the area of pay and men's attitudes to women workers. Women were still paid less than men and were often excluded from skilled male work. Braybon and Penny Summerfield's later work on women workers in both World Wars also reiterated this position, while acknowledging some positive effects. However, they insist that being 'let out of the cage' was a temporary phenomenon. Margaret R. and Patrice L-R. Higonnet used the term 'double helix' to suggest that as men moved into wartime military roles, women did work normally

⁸ See, for example, C. Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness: Images of Militarism and Womanhood in Women's Writings*, 1914-16 (Iowa, 1990). S. Gilbert, 'Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War', in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, M.R. Higonnet, J. Jenson, S. Michel and M. Collins Weitz (eds) (Yale, 1987), pp. 197-226. C. Reilly, *Scars Upon My Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War* (1981).

⁹ A. Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (1965). See also D. Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath* (1966). D. Copelman, 'A New Comradeship Between Men and Women: Family, Marriage and London Woman Teachers', in J. Lewis (ed), *Labour and Love* (Oxford, 1986). For an interpretation that stresses the continuities with pre-war society, see G. DeGroot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (1996).

¹⁰ M. Chadwick, *The Adolescent Girl* (1932), pp. 104-5.

performed by men, but with men's new roles being still more highly valued. Therefore the dynamics of gender subordination were not altered during the War. There is a class dimension too. Deborah Thom points out that the war was more productive of progress for middle-class women than for those who performed manual tasks in factories. Despite continued suspicion of the 'optimistic' model of wartime change, Angela Woollacott has contributed to the debate by seeing female munitions workers as symbols of modernity, challenging the gender order by being directly involved in the waging of war and blurring the boundaries of class through increased spending power and changing social behaviour¹¹ The distance between the two sides is invariably a matter of emphasis on areas of research. Thom argues that Woollacott does not fully take into account the complexities of wartime labour and novelties introduced to expand wartime production. Woollacott is also criticised for not explaining fully the impact of demobilisation during wartime, thus leaving out an account of society's 'stunning sense of ingratitude that is so evident in looking at the post-war history of munitions workers'. Woollacott insists, however that 'it is crucial to study a period on its own terms rather than in the light of later issues or concerns that subsequent decades might cast backward'.¹²

Gender, Class and Generation

Clearly, there is still a gap between the 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' models, although to attempt to limit the argument to such stark terms diminishes the complexity of the subject. Woollacott's model of munitions workers as symbols of modernity is persuasive because she extends the area of inquiry into other areas of female lives during the War: the issues of leisure, socialising and relationships are given a greater prominence than in previous accounts of munitions workers. The public visibility of

¹¹ G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (1981). G. Braybon and P. Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (1987). M.R. and P. L-R. Higonnet, 'The Double Helix', in Higonnet et al. *Behind the Lines*, pp. 31-47. D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* (1998), p. 3. A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (California, 1994).

¹² Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 9. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 14.

such females - not only at work but on the streets, in cinemas, cafes and pubs - is an important component of Woollacott's thesis. Gail Braybon, however, in a recent restatement of her contention that the War did little to change women's position in society, remains sceptical of focusing on such issues. Advising wariness about oral accounts of munitions workers' wartime lives, Braybon writes: 'most of those interviewed since the 1970s were very young - between the ages of 14 and 20 - during the war, and readily admitted that the more serious issues did not trouble them at the time. They were usually single and childless, and most of the money they earned they spent on themselves'.¹³ This statement is illuminating because it touches on the question of what is a 'serious' subject for the historian. It also suggests that the youthfulness of munitions workers is a barrier in attempting to ascertain the true 'significance' of wartime work for women. Braybon's observation is undoubtedly valid. Nina Cooper, a Sunderland girl who worked at Gretna and who was interviewed in the 1970s, remembered going to many dances and socialising with local boys. For her, the issue of votes for women was not something which occupied her mind when she was young.¹⁴ There were doubtless many other teenage girls who felt that way.

It is their youth which is most striking about Gretna munitions workers. Additionally, state provision at this government factory - in the form of model working conditions and welfare provision - was far more extensive than at other munitions factories. It seemed to me that this was no coincidence. At Gretna, supervision and regulation of almost every aspect of young workers' lives was treated with great importance, as the remarks of the factory superintendent, cited above, demonstrate. Contemporaries talked about 'The Gretna Experiment' because it was recognised as a novel approach. Social reformers concerned with problems of working conditions, welfare and leisure provision lauded the attempts of the state to

¹³ G. Braybon, 'Women and the War', in S. Constantine, M.W. Kirby and M.B. Rose (eds), The First World War in British History (1995), p. 160.

¹⁴ Item 8, Liddle Archive, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. Transcript of interview with Nina Cooper.

'improve' not only work conditions but also working-class habits - hence the concern about the drink question, the problem of what was shown in the cinemas, and what alternative facilities could be provided to direct workers towards 'sensible' recreation. Girls were encouraged to join the Girl Guides or go along to gymnastic classes in the hope that the counter-attractions of the cinema and the pub would appear less attractive. This was always a very optimistic position. A compromise was attempted whereby state-run pubs and cafes, dances and even cinemas were provided. This angered opponents of state intervention: providing better working conditions was one thing, providing facilities whereby female workers could drink and watch 'frivolous' entertainment was another. It cut across regional cultural sensibilities and challenged assumptions about what women could or could not do in public. Moreover, state direction challenged local autonomy. Critics of the Central Control Board - the Government body introduced to control wartime drink supply - attacked the scheme as 'un-English.' Yet in the Gretna area a Scottish minister talked of 'an alien system' introduced by the English that took power out of Scottish hands. The 'English ideal' of a pub as a family resource was not one that Scots recognised.¹⁵

The whole question of working-class habits in such areas as drink, work and leisure had, of course, been burning social issues before the War. Such problems were largely seen in relation to male working-class habits. Wartime circumstances meant that the introduction of female labour complicated or added to such problems. At Gretna thousands of young, single migrant females, from varied cultural and regional backgrounds, had to work and live together, form new communities and produce the explosives that would help to win the war. What became apparent while investigating the subject was the tension existing between new wartime identities for females and the pre-war identities that were never fully discarded after 1914. The 'pessimists' rightly point out that women were regarded as temporary full citizens for the duration of the war. But it would be pertinent to point out that there was a generational

¹⁵ See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of munitions workers and drinking.

dimension: young female workers became temporary adults. It is not merely a matter of gender and class, but also of youth. Feminist historians point to the theory of gender displacement - or the 'double helix', to use the Higonnet's term - whereby the advance of women into greater employment opportunities and access to improved welfare systems does not result in the equality of gender relations because the male domain of the battlefield takes economic and cultural priority.¹⁶ In the same way it can be argued that this double helix also has a generational dimension by promoting the young to the adult status of responsible, patriotic workers, while maintaining age differentials that meant that older, female welfare officials, social workers and policewomen retained their social superiority. The relationship between young working-class females and their older middle and upper-class supervisors was not one founded on equality.

This is not, however, an attempt to place generation above gender and class. If the question of age has been previously marginalised and the dynamics of class and gender given greater prominence, there is a danger of veering to the opposite extreme. The argument of this thesis is of the complex relationship between gender, class and generation. The dimensions of gender and class do not simply disappear. This becomes apparent in the terms used to describe young female workers - particularly in the word 'girl'. I have used the term throughout this thesis, while recognising the problems involved when describing females who, in many respects, can also be seen as adults. Certainly, direct involvement in the waging of war conveyed assumptions of responsibility and reliability. Penny Tinkler confronted a similar problem in her work on girls' magazines and, like her, it seemed appropriate to use the term 'girl', given the theme of the study.¹⁷ Gretna's female workforce was largely composed of young, mainly single, workers in their teens. The term 'girl' was commonly used by contemporaries to describe female workers. It was often used to describe those not on

¹⁶ M.R. and P. L-R Higonnet, 'The Double Helix' in *Behind the Lines*, pp. 31-47.

¹⁷ P. Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing Up in England 1920-1950* (1995), pp. 8-9.

a full adult wage. Dr. E.F. Armstrong, of the Soap and Candles Trades Employers Federation, told the Committee on Women in Industry in 1918 that the Government had brought a new factor into industry by taking the age of 18 to be the level of being paid an adult wage. Previously, employers had used the term 'girl' to refer to any female up the age of 25. Similarly, a Government draft memo on working hours for women and young persons in 1917 noted that 'girls of 18-25 can stand the strain better than women of 25-40'.¹⁸ It implied, however, not merely an acknowledgement of being a non-adult, but also of subordination by class or status. Thom notes that the use of the word 'girl' to describe workers was an indication of proletarian status rather than age.¹⁹ The emphasis in this thesis, however, is on the blurred boundaries between class and age: both were indicators of subordination. In the eyes of social reformers 'girl' carried another connotation; that of workers needing protection.

A few years before the War Edward Cadbury had described unskilled factory girls as being like 'big children', an illuminating phrase that captures the tension between competing images of adult responsible workers and irresponsible youth. It carries a suggestion of the problem of the 'child-adult' - or at least a problem for middle-class social reformers who saw such workers as needing guidance, protection and regulation. Wartime circumstances provided the opportunity for the state and voluntary philanthropic organisations to form an alliance, often providing ad hoc solutions to what were seen as temporary problems. Certainly many social reformers saw the War as an opportunity to promote their social policies in partnership with the state. The Ministry of Munitions was particularly keen to enlist social reformers like Joseph Rowntree and the Garden City pioneer Raymond Unwin to adopt welfare and housing policies to wartime circumstances. Pre-war attitudes to social reform were therefore instrumental in formulating wartime policy. The Ministry of Munitions also

¹⁸ PRO, LAB 5/1, Y39, Committee on Women in Industry, November 13, 1918, evidence of Dr. E.F. Armstrong. LAB 5/4, memo on working hours of women and young persons in factories, November 1917, p. 7.

¹⁹ D. Thom, Nice Girls and Rude Girls, p. 153.

appointed female welfare supervisors who were significantly older and from a higher class background than the workforce. What became clear during the research into the provision of welfare at Gretna was that the importing of thousands of young migrant workers was, overall, a 'problem': a problem of housing, a problem of work attendance and a problem of controlling public behaviour inside and outside the factory. The youthfulness of the workforce, their sex and their overwhelmingly working-class composition were identified as the main components of the 'problem'. Wartime welfare work for women has been identified by Woollacott as a significant step in changing definitions of women's authority from a pre-war moral authority to one based more on competence and rights. In the attempt to prove their competence and acceptance in new public spaces, their relationships with young working-class females was pivotal.²⁰ Welfare workers allied themselves to schemes of rational leisure and scientific inquiry into areas such as work performance, behaviour and health, all of which were normally the domain of masculine authority. In this way working-class girls could be 'explained'. Pitted against this was the seeming irrationality of youth that could not so easily be explained: why some girls did not turn up for work, why some preferred the attractions of cafes, pubs and cinemas to the long hours of monotonous and often physically taxing work, and why some girls preferred to play football instead of attending factory-run gymnastic classes.

This attitude is shown in a 1916 article in the suffragist magazine Modern Woman, where Sonia E. Howe complained about the immaturity of English girls. Howe compared them unfavourably with their Russian counterparts, who, she claimed, matured mentally much earlier. There 'it is not unusual for girls of 15 and 16 to take a keen interest in economic, social and political questions'.²¹ How true this supposed difference between Russian and English girls was is not the real concern; what is interesting is that Howe should highlight the frivolity of English girls as a wartime

²⁰ A. Woollacott, 'From Moral to Professional Authority: Secularism, Social Work, and Middle Class Women's Self-Construction in World War I Britain', Journal of Women's History, Vol. 10, no.2 (1998), pp. 83-111.

²¹ Modern Woman, January 22, 1916, p. 251.

problem. She was not alone. John Beard, of the Workers' Union, while attempting to recruit such girls, expressed concern about the spending capacity of wartime female workers, a subject which received prominent coverage at the time.²² The Northern Mail, for example, talked of 'Fur Coats and Queues' and an 'Orgy of Dress Extravagance' in Newcastle 'where' the majority of women are expensively dressed'.²³ Such charges were, of course, easier to levy than substantiate, but wartime myths were taken seriously. Beard, for example, thought that girls needed education on 'how to spend wisely'.²⁴ Beard's comment is illuminating: it highlighted the wartime concern over the public visibility of young munitions workers who were perceived to now have some surplus income at their disposal.

Youth, therefore, was a problem because of its potential to disrupt social cohesion during wartime. Angela Woollacott has drawn attention to wartime concerns over perceived gender and sexual disorder. That there was a generational dimension to this is apparent in the use of older women employed by the state to police working-class girls. The term 'flapper' was often used to describe teenage girls and the problem of their public behaviour. As Woollacott points out, 'flapper' acquired two new meanings in the late nineteenth century - an innocent young girl and a child prostitute. During the war, female workers who went to theatres, public houses or who were seen with soldiers were often described as flappers.²⁵ Members of the Women Police Service were quick to lecture girls seen smoking in public and 'highly painted teenagers' were admonished for their appearance. The National Union of Women Workers' police patrols also closely monitored the behaviour of such girls. For example, women patrols in the Hammersmith area of London cautioned 23 girls 'of

²² For a parody of the image of high spending munition workers, see Madeline Ida Bedford's poem 'Munition Wages' in C. Reilly, Scars Upon My Heart, pp. 7-8. See also, Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, pp. 124-6.

²³ Northern Mail, November 6, 1917.

²⁴ LAB 5/1, J28, Cttee on Women in Industry, evidence of J. Beard, October 5, 1918.

²⁵ A. Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 29 (1994), pp. 340-1.

the flapper type' one night in Broadway'.²⁶ Such young girls were also seen as undermining the serious women worker, as an attack on the 'working flapper' in Modern Woman suggested, because 'they were glad to do anything for a few shillings a week'.²⁷ The sombre tone, expected in wartime, meant that publicly visible young women enjoying themselves at places of entertainment struck a discordant note. A French observer, Marie de Perrot, asked of wartime London: 'Who are these happy crowds who wait before the cinemas and music halls in the evening? I would prefer a stern frown on each face, and to see their owners march to the night-shifts at factories, to do work which would help the common cause'.²⁸ It was not only the metropolitan areas that brought young people out into the streets late at night. In munitions areas such as Gretna the late night revelries of young people brought complaints from more sober-minded citizens.²⁹ The term 'flapper', therefore, often was used as a term of censure by adults. However, it was also used as a term by the commercial leisure industry to denote an audience to be targeted. Certainly at Gretna, and other munitions areas, the cinema was an immensely popular venue for workers. Films featuring female stars such as Pearl White were huge attractions for young munitions workers, who not only watched avidly, but also copied the dress style of such heroines. Pearl White songs and fashion accessories were heavily promoted on release of a new film and targeted at 'the flapper'.³⁰

Although cinema was a working-class leisure facility that cut across generational boundaries, it was, nevertheless, enthusiastically taken up by young people in particular. Andrew Davies' claim that a form of youth culture emerged in Britain long before the 1950s does have some validity. Davies points to the popularity of

²⁶ IWM, Women's Work Collection, Mun 43/94, WPS: Account of Work Accomplished 1916-17. PRO, MEPO 2/1748, Report of Work Done by Women Patrols, Hammersmith Division, March 1918.

²⁷ Modern Woman, January 8, 1916, p. 211.

²⁸ Modern Woman, January 29, 1916, p. 282.

²⁹ See letter in Annandale Observer, Feb. 16, 1917, complaining of young munitions workers singing loudly on their way home from dances.

³⁰ See Chapter 5 for an analysis of the impact of film culture on munitions workers.

commercial entertainment in Salford and Manchester that goes back to the turn of the century.³¹ Perhaps it is no coincidence that the 'problem' of adolescent girls was becoming a prominent issue around the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly focusing on how to channel energies into a socially acceptable direction.³² Female war work and adolescence had a common feature as both were seen as temporary periods. The period of adolescence for teenage girls occurred between leaving school and marrying. It offered a time of relative freedom and independence. Additionally, teenage girls who worked could theoretically lay claim to 'earned leisure', unlike those adult women who were not in paid work.³³ This cultural assumption was recognised by the Ministry of Munitions who provided a host of leisure outlets at Gretna for its young workforce. Such outlets, however, were designed to channel youthful energies into socially acceptable directions. This thesis tentatively suggests that, during the First World War, a youth identity, connected to film and fashion, rather than factory leisure provision, was particularly strong among young female munitions workers.

Much of the research undertaken for this thesis has necessarily been from the records of the Ministry of Munitions at the Public Record Office. It has also drawn heavily on the Women's Work Collection at the Imperial War Museum where personal reminiscences and diaries of female workers have been invaluable. Evaluating such sources, however, is not without its problems. Thom notes that the Imperial War Museum documents were collected to record the achievements of women during the First World War, thus emphasising the supposed novelty of

³¹ A. Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty (Buckingham, 1992), Chapter 4. See also D. Fowler, 'The Age of Luxury: Young Wage-Earners and Leisure', in A. Davies, and S. Fielding, Workers' Worlds: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939 (Manchester, 1993).

³² See Carol Dyhouse's discussion on G. Stanley Hall's Adolescence (1904) and other contemporary writings in Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England (1981), Chapter 4.

³³ The phrase is used in Claire Langhamer's discussion of female youth and leisure in C. Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England 1920-60 (Manchester, 2000), Chapter 3. Langhamer draws the distinction between the freedom of youthful leisure in contrast to leisure in adulthood that often comprised service or duty to others.

wartime work at the expense of continuities with women's work before 1914.³⁴ The use of such sources also tends to represent working-class females as being merely passive part-players of a particular social problem.³⁵ Nevertheless, such sources are useful in revealing attitudes towards female workers and what adult authority thought of young girls. Braybon makes the point that the historian has to study women as subjects and objects, for their critics and observers can reveal general views of women's capabilities and their status in society.³⁶ These sources can also reveal aspects of the lives of those who were less likely to leave behind a record of their existence, particularly those young workers regarded as 'rough', 'silly' or 'frivolous.' We catch glimpses of them sniggering at munitions tribunals when charged with being absent from work, coming home drunk to a hostel and abusing matrons, or going out in gangs on stealing sprees. Such females may have been in the minority, but they, too, worked in munitions factories even if - in the words of one welfare supervisor 'they soon faded from view'. Similarly, much use has been made of local newspapers from the Carlisle and Gretna areas which also reveal contemporary comment on the 'Gretna experiment'. How these young workers were praised and criticised can tell us much of the perceptions which society had of a significant group of workers.

The thesis, therefore, attempts to support the work of previous historians of World War I munitions workers in a number of ways. First, it addresses the topic of generation in relation to the lives of young female workers and their relationships with adult authority both inside and outside the workplace. The cordite factory at Gretna is a particularly pertinent model to study because of the dominance of teenage girls employed there. Additionally, while other historians have often concentrated on those who produced or filled shells, less attention has been focused on those who

³⁴ D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, pp. 36-7.

³⁵ See introduction to Higdonnet, Jensen, Michel and Weitz, *Behind the Lines*, 1987.

³⁶ G. Braybon, 'Women and the War' in Constantine et al, *The First World War in British History*, p. 140.

worked on the synthesising of explosives. The historical debate between the 'optimists' and 'pessimists' can be considered and tested in relation to a study of a single, but highly significant, factory. The focus of the thesis is not only on the experience of munitions workers, but also on how they were represented by contemporary observers. By approaching the subject in a way that gives equal weight to young workers' lives both inside and outside the workplace, the thesis attempts to gain a broader understanding of female wartime lives. In that sense, it is intended to contribute not only to our knowledge of working-class history and women's history, but also to cultural history. Another aim is an attempt to understand why the connection between work and leisure time was consistently made at Gretna, and certainly more so than at other munitions establishments. Was part of the 'problem' of female munitions workers a continuation of pre-war concerns about the 'problem' of adolescence, only this time set in a wartime context?

This study attempts to unravel the lives of these young female workers on a thematic basis. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the world of work. The first chapter is an analysis of the work performed at the Gretna explosives factory and the impact of such an industry in the Borders area. Chapter 2 deals with the significance of welfare schemes at work and the relationship between welfare supervisors and workers. Chapter 3 analyses the provision of hostel accommodation and lodgings for the migrant workers and its impact on the area. The following three chapters provide an analysis of workers' lives outside the factory. They look at state intervention in the supply of drink and its relevance for female workers, the significance of the cinema in leisure opportunities and attitudes towards factory-run entertainment. The final chapter deals with the regulation of public behaviour of workers and the significance of the use of women police groups and voluntary social work organisations such as the YWCA. Part of this chapter develops themes which were originally raised in my

Masters thesis on the role of the Women's Police Service at the Gretna munitions factory during the First World War.³⁷

³⁷ C. Brader, 'Policing the Gretna Girls: The Women's Police Service in World War I', MA thesis, University of Warwick, 1997.

Chapter 1

Women and Work at Gretna

The Construction of Gretna

The explosives factory at Gretna played a vitally important role in helping to defeat Germany. Its production of cordite dramatically increased the supply of explosives to the Western Front, following the outcry against 'the shell shortage' and the resultant Munitions of War Bill of July 1915. In June 1915 the Ministry of Munitions was created to oversee the production of armaments, with David Lloyd George as Minister¹ The Bill prohibited strikes and lock-outs and introduced compulsory arbitration to labour disputes. The Ministry also assumed control of factories engaged in war production. It provided, as Arthur Marwick notes, governmental control over such issues as work discipline, timekeeping and levels of output.² Armaments production was increased by the construction of new factories, particularly the cordite factory at Gretna and the shell factories at Cardonald in Glasgow and Georgetown in Erskine, Renfrewshire. These were erected in an impressively short space of time. The necessary land at Gretna was acquired under Defence of the Realm Act regulations in July 1915 and construction began almost immediately. Nine months later the first of the factory staff arrived. At Cardonald building commenced in August 1915 and was completed by February 1916.³ By the end of the war Lloyd George was boasting that such factories were producing in one morning more than the total amount of ammunition on the Western Front at the time of the Germans' attempt to take Paris.⁴ The writer L. K. Yates saw this battle of technologies as a significant

¹ For a detailed account see the official *History of the Ministry of Munitions* 1918-23 (repr 1976). See also R.J.Q. Adams, *Arms and the Wizard: Lloyd George and the Ministry of Munitions* 1915-16 (1978).

² A. Marwick, *The Deluge*, p100 (1965).

³ PRO, Mun 5/365/1122/2-22, National Factories. IWM Mun 12/6, *Cardonald Souvenir Magazine*, 1919, p. 3.

⁴ PRO, Mun 4/1741, Future Use of Filling Factories, November 13, 1918, quoting Lloyd George's remarks at Ministry of

component of contemporary warfare. It was a 'Herculean struggle' involving, not only armed forces, but also British and German scientists. Before the War three national factories were engaged in producing ammunition: by 1916 there were 150 national factories and over 5,000 controlled establishments. The whole of the North of England and Scotland, along with the Midlands, had become 'a vast arsenal.'⁵

Such determined bids to ensure victory did not come cheap. Capital expenditure on the Gretna factory amounted to almost £9.2 million: the original estimate had been around £2 million. Included in this total was over £1 million spent on roads and railways and almost £1.3m on the two purpose-built townships of Gretna and Eastriggs to house the workers. A coal-fired power station cost £1.3 million.⁶ Around 30,000 workers had been employed in erecting the factory and in May 1916, with the factory near completion, 13,000 construction workers were still at Gretna, with a substantial proportion having been recruited from Ireland.⁷

Gretna was chosen as a site for a number of reasons. It already had a good railway service with mainline links to the south, to Newcastle in the east, and northwards to Scotland. This was an essential factor as 600 wagonloads of material arrived daily during its peak period of production. Coal supplies came by rail from Fife and Northumberland and by sea from Wales. The River Esk provided the water supply with almost 10 million gallons drawn a day. Being on the west coast, it was secure from enemy action by land, sea and air. Anti-submarine netting was also placed along the Solway - the western outlet to the Irish Sea - as an added precaution. Importantly, too, for an explosives factory, it was not in close proximity to any large urban areas. Carlisle, about eight miles south of the factory, was the largest town in the area, with a population of 52,000. The nearest town was Annan, with a population of just over

Munitions Gun Ammunition Filling Conference.

⁵ LK Yates, *The Woman's Part: A Record of Munitions Work* (1918), p. 7.

⁶ PRO, Mun 4/6160, Disposal and Liquidation Committee, Sale of Gretna Factory, September 1921. Mun 4/5334, Future of Gretna Factory, July 25, 1919. *CJ* August 17, 1917.

⁷ PRO, Mun 7/255 Letter to Christopher Addison, Ministry of Munitions, May 6, 1916. Mun 5/285, HM Factory, Gretna, Description of Plant and Processes.

4,000, about four miles to the west. The absence of other nearby industrial complexes would also aid recruitment.⁸ The factory was nine miles in length, spanning both sides of the border (see Appendix) and included an internal railway system of nearly 100 miles with 17 passenger platforms. Eleven special trains carried over 5,000 operatives in from south-west Scotland and Cumberland and 3,900 were brought in from the townships of Gretna and Eastriggs.

The Ministry of Munitions employed the building company S. Pearson and Son to construct the factory. Its chairman, Sir Edward Pearson, was also appointed to the factory management board, along with South African engineering consultant David Gilmour, representing the Ministry, and technical production manager J.C. Burnham. Pearson, in particular, impressed the Ministry with his ability to overcome difficulties and actually produce results. Christopher Addison, under-secretary to Lloyd George, noted in his diary: 'He has about 20 different contractors under his command and manages the whole business without fuss and with remarkable success'. Another Ministry official was impressed by Pearson's handling of the navvies and their union representatives. On a visit to Gretna in early 1916 George Duckworth found the labourers 'a very poor lot, ill-fed, out-at-elbows and badly booted'. One union official was described as 'a paid agitator with a glib tongue . . . who did not look as though he had ever worked at a bench'. Another, described as a leader of the labourers, was 'a wild-eyed "man of the people," with long black hair and a necktie - a smouldering fire within him'. Despite such potentially troublesome workers, Duckworth was impressed with the way that 'they were admirably handled by Pearson'. Ministry officials proudly proclaimed Gretna as 'one of the Empire's greatest examples of modern industrial activity'.⁹

⁸ PRO, Mun 5/285, HM Factory, Gretna, Description of Plant and Processes, 1918. Mun 5/158/122.7/1, Report of visit to Gretna by George Duckworth, January 28, 1916. Mun 5/365/1122/2-22, National Factories.

⁹ Ibid., D(umfries) L(ibrary), DE 43 (57)p, Gretna Factory, Programme of Inspection, May 18, 1917. PRO, Mun 4/6160, Disposal and Liquidation Committee, September 1921. C. Addison, *Four and a Half Years*, Vol I, (1934), p. 211. PRO, Mun 5/158/1122.7/1, G.H. Duckworth's report on visit to Gretna, January 28, 1916.

The factory's annual output of cordite was expected to reach 40,000 tons, well in excess of the pre-war output of all other British factories put together. The Royal Gunpowder Factory at Waltham Abbey, for example, produced 70 tons a week before the war and doubled the quantity by August 1915. After being taken over by the Ministry of Munitions its weekly output went up to 250 tons. Its total wartime output was 31,716 tons, with its highest yearly production being 11,000 tons. At Gretna the latter figure was turned out in 10 weeks during its peak output period in mid-1917. The first despatch of cordite left Gretna at the end of September in 1916. It was a modest amount of 10 tons. By mid-October the weekly output was 90 tons and by the end of that month was nearing 400 tons. At the end of June 1917 its weekly total had reached almost 1,100 tons. In late 1915 Britain's total weekly output of cordite had been around 500 tons, and about 200 tons of that figure was due to shipments coming in from America.¹⁰ In this battle of technologies Gretna's largely female munitions workers made a significant contribution in producing the materials which secured Britain's eventual victory over Germany.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, after visiting Gretna in late 1916, appreciated the significance of their contribution. He wrote: 'We can never beat Hindenburg until we have beaten Krupp (the German armaments manufacturers), and that is what these khaki-clad girls of Moorside and elsewhere are going to do. Hats off to the women of Britain. Even all the exertions of the militants shall not in future prevent me from being an advocate for their vote, for those who have helped to save the State should be allowed to guide it'.¹¹ These 'women of Britain' were, at least at Gretna, largely teenage girls of 19 and under. In a short space of time they had achieved a new identity as responsible 'adult' workers due to wartime circumstances.

¹⁰ PRO Mun 5/285, Mun 2/22, Dept. of Explosives, weekly reports, 1916-17. LAB5/1, Committee on Women in Industry meeting, November 16, 1918, L33, evidence of David Gilmour.

¹¹ A. Conan Doyle, 'Eastriggs and Gretna, 'The Miracle Towns' in AO, December 1, 1916.

Age, Class and Ethnicity of Gretna Workers

Historians have noted that of around one million female munitions workers the overwhelming majority were working-class. Angela Woollacott, for example, has claimed that 'only a tiny fraction' were of middle or upper-class origin. Additionally, a substantial proportion were adolescent or teenage girls.¹² These observations can equally be applied to the Gretna workforce, but what is particularly noticeable is the difference in the proportion of workers under the age of 18, compared to other Government establishments. In a 1917 report on the workforce of national factories, of 149,351 females employed, 141,822 were aged over 18, while 7,529 were below that age. However, in explosives factories there was a much higher rate of younger workers. Only 20 per cent of the Gretna workforce was married. Operatives under 18 there comprised 62.1 per cent in a workforce of 19,733 - 60 per cent of whom were female. At the Welsh factory of Pembrey, which also produced cordite, 58.2 per cent of the 5,361-strong workforce were female and 60.7 per cent under 18.¹³ Deborah Thom has noted that there was no nursery provision at Gretna, unlike other munitions factories, because mobile, childless workers predominated. At other factories the Ministry of Munitions funded 75 per cent of the costs of creches and gave a maintenance grant of 7d per 12 hours per baby. A total of 28 grants were allocated during 1917. The Cardonald projectile factory in Glasgow had a creche for 60-70 babies where workers 'enthusiastically' raised their 25 per cent quota of the costs - £1,200. Woolwich Arsenal also provided nursery facilities. Thom probably rightly attributes such provision to a short-term attempt to keep and attract workers.¹⁴

Married women did have creche facilities available in the Borders area, however. The Hudson Scott metal box factory in Carlisle had a day nursery which featured

¹² See, for example, A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 2 & 37-8. D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*.

¹³ PRO, Mun 5/100/360/42, Ministry of Munitions Report on Labour in Government Establishments, December 1917. LAB5/1, L13, evidence of David Gilmour to Committee on Women in Industry.

¹⁴ D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, pp. 38-9 & 175, 1998. IWM Mun 12/1-4, Cardonald Projectile factory Welfare Report. Mun 18/9/7, Welfare Work Outside the Factory, p. 8.

prominently in their recruitment advertisements.¹⁵ At Gretna, despite welfare provision being viewed as a high priority, creches were not needed. While temporary hostel accommodation in the townships of Gretna and Eastriggs housed around 19,000 single male and female workers, the purpose-built permanent cottages provided space for only 550 families. Two schools were built in the area to educate around 550 children. Newspaper reports of the Gretna workforce also remarked on its youthfulness. The Carlisle Journal, reporting the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Gretna in May 1917, described the workforce as 'mostly young and mostly single'. Noting the exuberant reception given to the Royal visitors, the reporter commented that 'it was in keeping with the prevailing high spirits of its youthful inhabitants'.¹⁶ Church of Scotland social workers who visited the factory also noted that the workforce comprised 'mainly young women'.¹⁷ Ellen Lorraine, from Dunblane, in Scotland, started work at Gretna when she was 15. Her sister had to lie about her age to ensure she was taken on, suggesting that the official starting age was 16 years. Victoria Robertson, from Darlington, was 16 when she went to Gretna, as was Ethel Burnett, from Sunderland.¹⁸ Recruitment of chemical workers during the war focused on young, single girls. Employers justified this by stating that married women should be at home looking after children, especially if husbands were in the army.¹⁹

Not only was it a young workforce, but it was also predominantly working-class. Out of every hundred workers only 20 per cent had never worked before. Probably these would be mostly 14 and 15-year-olds, rather than middle-class girls. Former

¹⁵ C.J., March 16, 1917.

¹⁶ C.J., May 22, 1917.

¹⁷ D(umfries) & G(alloway) C(ourier) & H(erald), March 17, 1917.

¹⁸ Liddle Archive, University of Leeds, Item 22. J. Ritchie, The Gretna Girls, Wigtown District Museum publication (1985), pp. 8 & 10.

¹⁹ PRO, LAB 5/1 S24, evidence of I.W. Stuart, Chemical Employers Federation.

domestic servants comprised 36 per cent, while 15 per cent had previously worked in other munitions factories. A further 12 per cent had other factory experience and 5 per cent had been shop assistants. The remaining 12 per cent had been laundry workers, farm labourers, dressmakers, teachers and clerks.²⁰ Thus, despite the young age of many workers, and although they could be portrayed as performing new wartime tasks, the actual experience of work was not new. Oral testimony from Gretna workers also underlines this. Nina Cooper, from Sunderland, worked as a domestic servant before the war. Another Sunderland woman, Ethel Burnett, worked in a cake shop. Mrs. E.N. Smith was another pre-war shop worker from the age of 13. Such girls often came from urban, industrial families. Emily Davies and Ethel Burnett were daughters of Sunderland shipyard workers, while Mrs. P. Burton's father was a Durham miner.²¹

In 1911 over one-and-a-half million girls aged 10-21 were engaged in paid work in England and Wales - about 40 per cent of the total female population of that age. The percentage increased to 58.6 per cent for girls aged between 14 and 18. There were 326,000 14 to 16-year-olds working in 1911 and 467,000 16 to 18-year-olds. While 38.7 per cent of 14-year-old girls were in occupations nationally in 1911, regional variations could dramatically increase that percentage. In Lancashire textile towns, for example, the figures were much higher. In Burnley 87.2 per cent of 14-year-olds were deemed to be working, as opposed to 36.5 per cent in London. Additionally, in textile areas girls as young as 12 started work in the mills as half-timers. Females over 13 had comprised up to 60 per cent of the Lancashire cotton workforce between 1851 and 1871. Where factory work was available fewer girls were liable to go into domestic service. Lady Florence Bell, in her 1907 study of Middlesbrough, noted that the male-dominated iron trade in the area meant that many working-class girls had to

²⁰ PRO, LAB 5/3, Report of Committee on Women in Industry, summaries, 1919, p. 72.

²¹ Liddle Archive, University of Leeds, Items 4, 8, 22 & 23.

choose between shop work or domestic service.²² Both factory girls and domestic servants were an important source of recruitment at Gretna. The Board of Trade estimated that around 100,000 females had left domestic service by 1916.²³ The newly-built Stratton works at Swindon, for example, had a large proportion of ex-servants working there in 1917. The Cotton Powder Co, with factories on the Kent coast, employed ex-servants and shopgirls with no factory experience. The National Filling Factory at Abbey Wood, in London, had up to 3,000 females from domestic service.²⁴ This wartime phenomenon, however, continued a pre-war trend, with an overall decline in domestic service and agricultural jobs. Wartime circumstances merely accelerated this trend. Between 1881 and 1911 while the number of women in occupations declined from 34.05 per cent to 32.51 per cent (-1.5 per cent), the proportion of women working in industry went up from 15.4 per cent to 15.96 per cent (+0.5 per cent).²⁵ However, not all domestic servants rushed to munitions work, even though they were often seen as desirable employees. Many preferred clerical and shop work, a trend which again had pre-war antecedents, as the report of the Committee on Women in Industry acknowledged. The committee also observed in 1919 that many would not return to domestic service, preferring jobs with more personal freedom and less restrictive hours. A Coventry munitions worker told the Committee that girls would only go back into service 'as a last resort'.²⁶

Braybon and Summerfield have also questioned the 'novelty' of women's wartime munitions work.²⁷ Employment of females in the armaments industry occurred

²² 1911 census figures, cited in D.J. Collier, *The Girl In Industry* (1917), pp. 1x, 39 & 55-6. P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (New Brunswick, 1984 edn), p. 112. L. Tilly and J.W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (1987), p83. F. Bell, *At the Works* (1907), pp. 178-9.

²³ IWM, EMP 4.282, Standing Joint Committee of Women's Industrial Organisations, 'The Position of Women After the War' (nd).

²⁴ PRO, Mun 5/365/1122/2-22, National Factories. LAB 5/1, Committee on Women in Industry, October 29, 1918, evidence of Mr. Todhunter, Cotton Powder Co. D72, evidence of Mr. Melville-Smith, National Filling Factory, Abbey Wood.

²⁵ PRO, LAB 5/3, Report on Committee on Women in Industry, Cmd 136, 1919.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁷ G. Braybon and P. Summerfield, *Out of the Cage* (1987), p. 13.

before 1914; wartime circumstances significantly increased this trend. Nobels Explosives Co. in Ardeer, employed 596 women before the war, mainly on semi-skilled or unskilled tasks such as cartridging explosives or packing and blending. During the war Nobels employed 1084 females in the cordite department and a further 154 as general labourers.²⁸ In another Scottish explosives factory at Kynochtown, 17.7 per cent of the pre-war workforce were female. This increased to 30 per cent after 1914. The firm of Curtis and Harvey had nine factories with a 25 per cent female staff, increased to 50 per cent in the war. The Cotton Powder Co. in Kent had a 23 per cent pre-war female workforce. During hostilities almost three-quarters of the workforce pressing cordite was female. Before 1914 this work had been performed by men because it involved night shift working. State legislation had previously prevented women performing such tasks.²⁹

Such official statistics, however, undoubtedly fail to provide a complete picture of the experience of work for females. This is because much casual work as well as unpaid housework went unrecorded, as feminist historians have stressed.³⁰ Additionally, daughters were often an important part of the family economy, whether as outside factory workers or casual workers in the home. They were a resource whom parents expected to work, and daughters expected to contribute to the family economy. Even those who didn't bring in a wage were expected to perform errands, mind younger siblings and other domestic duties. This was often seen as training for future roles as wives and mothers rather than as training for the world of paid work.³¹

The Gretna workforce was also recruited from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Girls came not only from Cumberland and south-west Scotland but also from all parts of Great Britain as well as Ireland. Gaelic-speakers from the Highlands

²⁸ PRO LAB 5/1, S26-7, evidence of John Rogers, of Nobels, October 29, 1918.

²⁹ Ibid., S41, evidence of Mr. Maginness, Kynochtown cordite factory. S 45, Mr. Metcalfe, Curtis and Harvey. S53, Mr. Todhunter, Cotton Powder Co.

³⁰ See, for example, Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950* (Sussex, 1984), p. 58.

³¹ See, for example Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, pp. 114-5. A. Davin, *Growing Up Poor* (1996), pp. 172-3.

fishing industry were recruited alongside young, urban daughters of industrial workers from Tyneside, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Press reports of the Royal visit to Gretna in May 1917 comment on the many dialects of the young workforce - 'a Tower of Babel' according to the Carlisle Journal report. A contemporary account of life at Gretna also observed: 'It was apparent by the various dialects that all areas of the British Isles were represented. . . .the east coast (of Scotland) fishing ports had a strong contingent'.³² What appears to have been a common occurrence is that groups of girls from the same community came together to Gretna and often shared the same accommodation. This was a policy echoed in the Army's recruitment of 'Pals' battalions, where men from a single locality or industry enlisted together - an effective tactic in immediately forging group solidarity.³³ Similarly, in munitions recruitment, this may well have served initially to preserve regional identities. However, it could also result in workers being more likely to sharply differentiate themselves from other groups of girls. Woolwich workers interviewed by Deborah Thom often cited geographical origin as a basis for differentiating themselves from others in the workforce, particularly when they spoke differently and could be more easily accused of being clannish.³⁴ Gretna workers from the North-East also spoke of their experiences in similar terms. It is significant that Emily Hubble remembered the outright hostility of Scottish girls to English girls. Jeered as 'Sassenachs' and told to 'get back to England,' she remembered the hostility as not just verbal banter but as something far more threatening. She too explained the experience in terms of her own regional identity: . . . 'some of these girls had never met any English people, you see'. Mrs. Burton, from Newcastle, didn't like being with Welsh girls, who insisted on speaking in their own language when together: 'We didn't like it because we knew

³² CJ May 2, 1917. E. Ritchie, The Gretna Girls, p. 5. DL, HM Factory Gretna, anonymous reminiscences (nd).

³³ See, for example, P. Simkins, Kitchener's Army (Manchester, 1988).

³⁴ D. Thom, Nice Girls and Rude Girls, p. 153.

they could speak English'.³⁵ The hostility between different ethnic groups does seem to have diminished once the initial shock of learning to work and live alongside each other was overcome. Significantly, Ethel Burnett, from Sunderland, went to Gretna as a 16-year-old with her sister. She began by living in hostel accommodation, but eventually moved to lodgings in nearby Langholm to be near the Scottish girls who worked with her. Emily Hubble, despite her original unfavourable encounter with Scottish girls, later had more relaxed relationships with them: 'It took us a while before we were accepted and then we all got friendly in a short while and mixed well'. Mrs E.N. Smith, from Sunderland, also got on well with a group of Irish girls who she thought were 'friendly'.³⁶ Such a transition is not surprising. Girls imported into unfamiliar surroundings and living and working alongside others with different regional and cultural identities would surely have taken refuge in promoting existing group identities as a defence mechanism. That would have emphasised the differentiation among Gretna workers to a strong degree. It appears that, over time, more intimate contact with other girls could break down cultural barriers. Munitions workers could be divided by age, class and cultural background, but, nevertheless, new identities based on workplace relationships were being formed, as the example of Ethel Burnett illustrates. This is also evident in a local newspaper account of a case of theft involving five munitions workers, all of whom were teenage girls. One night they had gone into a fish and chip shop in Gretna, which also served as a grocery store. They plunged the shop into darkness by blowing out an oil lamp and made off with some items of food. The five all lived together in factory accommodation but came from different regional backgrounds, from south-west Scotland, Cumbria and the North-East. Clearly, age was a factor in helping to transcend regional identities and forge new relationships to a certain extent.³⁷

³⁵ Liddle Archive, University of Leeds, Item 4, Tape 303, Mrs. Emily Hubble. Item 25, Mrs. Burton.

³⁶ Ibid., Item 4, Mrs. Emily Hubble, Item 22, Mrs. Ethel Burnett, Item 23, Mrs. E.N. Smith.

³⁷ D&GC&H, February 21, 1917, 'Gretna Girls in Trouble'.

Recruitment of the Workforce

At its peak in 1917, the Gretna factory employed 11,576 females out of a total workforce of 16,642 - 69.5 per cent of the workforce. The number of operatives had been just 200 when the factory became operational in June 1916. By October 1918, with the war nearing its end, 6,285 females were employed - 58.5 per cent of the workforce.³⁸ In little over a year, therefore, over 11,000 were attracted to Gretna. Thom has pointed out that it was government need for labour which opened up the Woolwich Arsenal to women, rather than the problem of women's unemployment. The same comments could be applied to Gretna. In March 1915 the Women's War Register had been set up specifically to enrol women for war service.³⁹ Females were encouraged to apply for munitions work through Government Labour Exchanges in the interests of more efficient organisation. This was an important aspect, particularly when the movement of huge numbers of females across the country was involved. Girls who turned up on their own initiative at factories were regarded as a 'problem' because they had not gone through the official channels. Haphazard recruitment was blamed for assigning skilled women to unskilled jobs, while local females with factory experience remained unemployed.⁴⁰ Such an approach interrupted the smooth flow of applicant from Labour Exchange to interview by factory welfare supervisor to appropriate job. Part of this process involved welfare officials producing 'facts' about the female workforce via a card index system which recorded their 'whole subsequent history . . . from start to finish'.⁴¹

The Labour Exchanges, however, often produced problems of their own.

Concerns about the ability of Exchanges to recruit adequate supplies of munitions

³⁸ IWM, Mun 14/8, Women and their Work at Gretna. PRO, Mun 5/369/1122.7/19, Gretna Factory employment statistics. LAB 5/1, Committee on Women in Industry, L13, evidence of David Gilmour.

³⁹ D. Thom, 'Women and Work in Wartime Britain', in R. Wall and J. Winter (eds), *The Upheaval of War* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 298 & 304. A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 23-4. D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, pp. 56-7 & 86.

⁴⁰ IWM, Mun 18/9/7, Welfare and Health Section: Welfare Work Outside the Factory, pp. 1-2. PRO Mun 4/1541, Female Labour at National Filling Factories.

⁴¹ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/26, Welfare at Cardonald NP Factory, Glasgow, May 1916-Feb. 1919. See Chapter 3 for welfare systems of record keeping in hostels and lodgings.

workers led to undercover Ministry of Munitions female staff visiting London premises in the guise of seeking work. A subsequent report called for a simplification of procedures, including extending the opening hours after 4pm and providing more private facilities during interviews. The undercover Ministry official was probably an older, upper-class woman, judging by her antipathy to the Labour Exchange official, described as 'youngish' and not belonging to 'the educated classes'. In the interview room, with a counter across one end - 'like a Post Office' - the woman was asked personal details and address. She thought 'this was rather public, proclaiming one's private concerns in a public enquiry room with other people about'. She suggested filling a form in might be more appropriate. A further complication was encountered when she was told she would have to register at the nearest exchange to where she lived and not to the one where she worked. Complaints were also made that no information was given about special training centres or classes for 'educated women to be trained in acetylene welding'.⁴² Working-class girls may also have found the experience of using Labour Exchanges intimidating. Trade unions, too, were initially suspicious of state involvement in recruitment. An Amalgamated Society of Engineers official described the bureaucratic process as 'Prussianisation'.⁴³

Young girls going to factories such as Gretna also had to travel huge distances to reach their destination. This invariably meant travelling by train to Carlisle where they were met by local voluntary workers, members of the Women's Police Service or factory welfare officials before being despatched to the Gretna factory. Welfare officials often expressed concerns about the transit of young females, 'many of them unaccustomed to travelling'. Many girls were reported arriving penniless or having already spent what money they had with them before reaching their destination. Additionally, young girls were deemed to be likely to expose themselves to moral dangers. Dorothea Proud, in her handbook on welfare work, warned that 'the plight of

⁴² PRO, Mun 5/57/320/21, Notes of experience of woman applicant for munitions work, November 1916.

⁴³ M(odern) R(eords) C(entre), MSS 259/4/14/30, ASE Monthly Journal, October 1916, p. 70.

young women in a strange town is not only uncomfortable, but a serious danger'.⁴⁴

Of course, such evidence is only available from welfare and social workers who were prone to cast working-class girls in the light of being helpless victims, because of their supposed immaturity or irresponsibility. Probably, girls' own fears over travelling to and reaching destinations were offset by the presence of other females from their own community who travelled with them. All the Gretna workers interviewed for the Liddle Archive went with close friends or sisters. Ellen Lorraine, from Dunblane, in Scotland, also came to Gretna with her elder sister.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the uncertainty of this new life may also have appealed as part of the adventure of becoming a munitions worker in a new environment. The emotional aspect of leaving the family home and moving to a different part of the country must have produced fear and trepidation, but also excitement and anticipation. The proportion of such feelings would have been as varied as the munitions workers themselves. Nevertheless, thousands of young girls did travel from all over Britain to Gretna. Why did they come?

Evelyn Davies was 20-years-old when she came to work at the Gretna factory from Sunderland. The attractions of munitions work stemmed partly from a sense of adventure. Additionally, her father, a shipyard worker, did not object and her mother was dead. 'It was just the idea of a change and going away from home.' Significantly, Emily went to Gretna with her close friend, Emily Hubble, who was later to become her sister-in law. Others were obviously attracted by the comparatively high wages on offer. Nina Cooper, also from Sunderland, cited the opportunity to earn more money as a reason for going to Gretna. Before the war she worked as a servant, working 60 hours a week for 6s. In August 1916 the gross female weekly adult rate for unskilled work at Gretna was 22s 6d. After deductions for board and food of 12s the net wage was 10s 6d. Sunday work and overtime could double that amount. By September

⁴⁴ IWM, Mun 18/9/7, *Welfare Work Outside the Factory*, pp. 1-2. D. Proud, *Welfare Work*, p. 119.

⁴⁵ Liddle Archive, University of Leeds, Items 4, 8, & 22. Reminiscences of Mrs Ellen Lorraine, cited in E. Ritchie, *The Gretna Girls*, p. 8.

1918 the adult female rate was 33s - a 77 per cent increase in two years. Although wartime inflation must have reduced the impact of such a rise, this was, overall, an improvement in female wages. However, the minimum adult male rate for process workers at Gretna was significantly higher, at 52s in August 1918 - a 55 per cent rise in two years. Mrs. P. Burton, from Washington, Co. Durham, also cited the wages as an attraction. She mentioned the wartime patriotic appeal to females as a further reason.⁴⁶

To promote munitions work, Ministry of Munitions female officials toured urban areas urging young females to enter war service. Mrs. E.N. Smith took up munitions work after hearing 'a lady' give a lecture on the subject in Newcastle, where 'we were told we were much needed at Gretna'.⁴⁷ Public appeals to boost recruitment were also made in the Carlisle area once production got under way. David Gilmour, from the factory management board, addressed the meeting and assured would-be applicants that the work was 'pleasant, healthy and not dangerous', but required 'both attention and intelligence'. Factory conditions were 'ideal as they possibly could be'. People were warned not to spread rumours about 'things that did not exist'.⁴⁸ Gilmour was seeking to allay fears about employment in a place where there were not only health risks attached to the job because of the synthetic processes involving the mixing of acids, but also the possibility of death. Local people already employed at Gretna would no doubt swiftly pass on by word of mouth exactly what sort of work was being carried out there and in what conditions. Certainly, in its early stages, Gretna was not quite the model establishment its government-fuelled publicity suggested.

Although production began in September 1916 the construction of the factory was still an on-going process. In many ways the factory area and the new townships were

⁴⁶ PRO, LAB 5/1, L14 & L21, evidence of David Gilmour to Committee on Women in Industry, November 16, 1918. Liddle Archive, University of Leeds, Items 4 & 8. For a detailed discussion on women's wartime wages, see Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage*, pp. 48-51, 57-8.

⁴⁷ Liddle Archive, Item 23.

⁴⁸ *CJ*, November 28 1916.

originally like a huge building site with a sea of mud to wade through to reach one's destination. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's article on 'The Miracle Town' of Gretna, while fulsome in its praise for what had been achieved there, also acknowledged this less pleasant aspect when he wrote about 'the primeval ooze lying in stagnant pools'. Ministry of Munitions official George Duckworth toured the site in early 1916 and found the township of Gretna 'forbidding'. It was 'a conglomeration of one-storied wooden hutmentsThe place was a sea of mud. . . .with no provision for tree planting or even for the humblest flower beds'. Although such conditions were deemed adequate enough for the migrant construction workers, Duckworth thought that permanent workers at the factory would raise more objections. He wrote in his report: 'It will be difficult to find successors of a decent class unless more regard is paid to appearances'. Duckworth recommended more stringent fire precautions in the township, the planting of trees and flowers and the appointment of a professional rat catcher to control the vermin in the huts. He concluded: 'The better class of man and woman attracted, the less will be the danger of accidents'.⁴⁹

In the Carlisle and Gretna areas public appeals for female workers continued unabated in late 1916. A recruitment campaign was held in Annan in December 1916 and addressed by Miss Burnett, the chief organiser of women workers for the Ministry of Munitions. Fears about the factory conditions were obviously raised at the meeting and Miss Burnett was forced to admit that conditions were 'rather disagreeable' at the moment, but added 'they would soon get better'.⁵⁰ Clearly, the recruitment campaign was not running as smoothly as anticipated. The Ministry noted 'an inadequate supply of girls for Gretna' in September 1916. Seven months later, although output was showing a steady improvement, there was still 'a shortage of women'.⁵¹

⁴⁹ A. Conan Doyle, 'Eastriggs and Gretna: The Miracle Towns', AO, December 1, 1916. PRO, Mun 5/158/1122.7/1, G.H. Duckworth's report on visit to Gretna, January 28, 1916.

⁵⁰ D&GC&H, December 2, 1916.

⁵¹ PRO, Mun 2/22, Explosives Department reports, September 1916 and March 3, 1917.

The Impact of the Gretna Factory

As suggested above, local knowledge about factory conditions at Gretna may well have hindered the Ministry's recruitment campaign. Additionally, lack of local resources in a relatively sparsely populated area like Cumberland and south-west Scotland always meant that a large part of the workforce would have to be imported into the area. The Gretna factory meant something different to the local population than it did to the nation as a whole. The social impact on the area following the arrival of thousands of construction workers in 1915 had been dramatic. Social order became the most prominent issue as this army of workers headed for Carlisle at weekends searching for entertainment and alcohol, and convictions for drunkenness rocketed.⁵² While the Gretna factory could be feted nationally as a vital weapon in the war against Germany, to some of the local population Gretna was synonymous with the upheaval of local society and trade. Local newspapers from 1915 reflect this antagonism in a number of ways. Construction workers drafted into the area could be portrayed as earning huge wages while other men were dying in the trenches. Resentment increased following the passing of the Second Military Service Act in May 1916 which conscripted all men aged between 18 and 41. Gretna, it was suggested, was a 'Haven for Shirkers,' as one local headline proclaimed. Much prominence was given to cases of workers seeking exemption from Military Appeal Tribunals. 'Conscientious Objectors: Where Do They All Come From?' asked one local paper. A leader in the Carlisle Journal approved attempts to 'weed out shirkers' at Gretna and voiced complaints about the loss of agricultural workers in Dumfriesshire to munitions work.⁵³ Such complaints did not go unheeded. When rumours began circulating that Army Recruitment Officers were investigating the

⁵² See Chapter 4 for the imposition of state control on the drinks trade.

⁵³ D&GC&H, April 5, 1916. CJ, May 16, 1916.

claims of those who purported to be essential war workers the factory lost 1,000 men in three days in May 1916, significantly just as the local press campaign intensified. In November 1916 Ministry officials panicked when 5,000 Irish labourers threatened to pack their bags and leave because of fears they were about to be called up. They were swiftly given temporary exemption badges. Despite local hostility to such a highly visible group of migrant male workers, their involvement in wartime production was vital. Ministry officials admitted: 'Their departure would have put a stop to the progress of the construction of the factory, which is most urgently required'.⁵⁴ Such action, however, probably fuelled local resentment. When a Gretna labourer broke his neck and died at Carlisle station while drunk the Coroner told the inquest that there were a lot of 'undesirables' in town and 'these were the kind of men bringing disgrace upon Carlisle'.⁵⁵

The image of migrant workers seemingly leading a life of luxury was posited against another of wartime deprivation for solid citizens. The 'Echoes' column in the Dumfries and Galloway Courier and Herald related the story of an Irish navvy who came to Gretna hauling a brand new suitcase to his hut along with 'three substantial bottles'. The columnist acidly remarked: 'The Government's economy campaign apparently doesn't embrace Gretna'. A Dumfries County Council meeting heard tales of 'gross extravagance at Gretna' where the Government was wasting ratepayers' money. Local employers no doubt felt and contributed to this resentment. One cafe owner even took a young boy to court for breach of contract when he left his job as a 5s a week errand boy to go to Gretna as a labourers' mate, heating navvies' food tins. Carlisle magistrates fined the teenager, a move applauded by local newspapers which commented that the contractor was paid by the Government out of ratepayers' money, so could afford to pay the boy 20s a week⁵⁶

⁵⁴ PRO, Mun 7/255, Gretna labour, letter to C. Addison, May 6, 1916. Mun 5/57/320/27, Gretna labour, November 1916.

⁵⁵ D&GC&H, May 17, 1916.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, February 12 & 19, May 17, October 14, 1916.

Government intervention that affected local businesses and rates was a sensitive issue for middle-class sections of society and was commented on extensively in the area. Unfortunately, working-class reaction to the factory is harder to gauge. What is apparent, however, despite the reservations about factory conditions that were raised, is that many young local workers, both male and female, did rush to find employment there. Complaints about the scarcity of female agricultural workers abound. At the Annan half-yearly hiring of rural servants in May 1917 it was found that 'kitchen women and byre women were very scarce'. Wages of around 10s a week were now being offered to attract workers. In the October hiring the scarcity continued and 'farmers had great difficulty in coming to terms' with those seeking work. Females were now being offered between £12 and £16 for six-month contracts on milking duties. One farmer said his wages bill had doubled over the last few years.⁵⁷

Dumfries mill girls left their previous occupations to work at Gretna because they could significantly increase their wages. Unsurprisingly, local firms attempted to stem this loss. Dumfries Military Tribunal heard a case brought by local textile workers who had been refused leaving certificates to go into munitions work. The system of leaving certificates, introduced under the Munitions of War Act in July 1915, prevented workers moving without their employers' consent. Those without leaving certificates had to wait six weeks before taking up a new job. It caused much resentment and confusion over the definition of munitions work within the terms of the Act.⁵⁸ The abolition of the system in late 1917, as the Carlisle Journal noted, 'will give great satisfaction to workmen.'⁵⁹ The case in Dumfries in February 1917 typified the problem. Mill workers there had switched to making army clothing, although it was not a controlled establishment. One 17-year-old who worked as a piecer earned around 15s a week, but wanted to go to Gretna where she could get

⁵⁷ CJ, May 8, 1917. D&GC&H, Oct. 20, 1917.

⁵⁸ J. Rubin, War, Law and Labour: The Munitions Acts, State Regulation and the Unions (Oxford, 1987), p. 1. A. Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, pp. 97-8. D. Thom, Nice Girls and Rude Girls, pp. 58-8.

⁵⁹ CJ, September 28, 1917.

around 32s a week. The use of war bonuses, theoretically available to female workers, was often used as a disciplinary measure against recalcitrant workers. The mill girl had not received any bonuses because of 'insubordination'. Such bonuses were given for regular attendance and 'for those who behaved themselves'. The girl was 'one of a clique who were trying to get away', and had refused to return to the mill. What was troubling to employers and local officialdom was that the law could be used by young females to challenge authority. The Tribunal Sheriff adjourned the case while he took advice from the Ministry of Munitions as to whether army clothing suppliers came under the definition of munitions work. The girls put up a strong case which seems to have shaken the Sheriff. He warned them, however: 'We don't encourage a rebellious spirit of that sort'.⁶⁰

Clearly local opinion about Gretna varied tremendously. Images of overpaid migrant workers, evading the call-up and government bodies overriding local sensibilities to allegedly subsidise such people, were commonly produced. The state-run factory also interfered with the local economy in other ways, forcing employers to compete for workers and offer higher wages. Arthur Marwick claims that juveniles did particularly well out of the wartime economy, obtaining wages well out of their reach before the war by entering munitions work.⁶¹ In rural areas like Cumberland and south-west Scotland, young girls left poorly paid agricultural work for the munitions factory, as did mill girls who were not above displaying a degree of assertiveness in claiming their right to become patriotic workers. Additionally, a second tide of migrant workers - this time young, single females, strangers to the area and from disparate backgrounds, were attracted to the factory. Their job was to produce the explosives to help win the war. The next section analyses exactly what sort of work was performed by such females.

⁶⁰ D&GC&H, February 17, 1917.

⁶¹ A. Marwick, *The Deluge*, p 157.

The Work Process

The synthesising of explosives comprised a different work system to that of many other female munitions workers who produced and filled shells in national projectile and filling factories. It involved chemical process work, much of which could be hazardous. Female workers predominated in sections of the factory where the risk of explosion or exposure to acid fumes was a constant reality. Few women were engaged in engineering at Gretna; 182 out of a total of 1,426. As Kozak and Braybon and Summerfield have shown, such jobs undertaken by females were either altered or subdivided to be reconstituted into semi-skilled women's work.⁶² Engineering jobs performed by Gretna females were milling, shaping, drilling and pipe screwing where 'a long apprenticeship is not essential'. Ministry officials in describing such work, stressed the dependency of women on skilled males: 'Their assistance on this work is of great value but naturally they do not attain real independence at work of this nature and an experienced fitter is therefore always at hand to supervise and help with any difficulties which may arise, such as adjustment of the machines and resetting the tools'. Only 21 females worked in the electrical department out of a total of 98, doing work such as assisting at electrical switchboards and charging electric tractors.⁶³ There were 36 female storekeepers and 43 males. In contrast the acids, nitrocotton, nitro-glycerine and cordite sections had a female workforce of 9,850 in July 1917. There were 2,053 male workers in these sections. A further 778 females were employed in the townships and hostels, mainly as cleaners, laundry, canteen and shop workers. The office and laboratory staff comprised 709 women out of a total of 1,741. Most of these appear to have been middle-class females.' They are of the higher type as regards status and education than most of the girl operatives of the manufacturing sectionsThe qualities looked for are alertness and adaptability.' Advertisements

⁶² M. Kozak, *Women Munition Workers in the First World War*, DPhil thesis, University of Hull, 1976. G. Braybon and P. Summerfield, *Out of the Cage* (1987). G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (1981).

⁶³ IWM, Mun 14/8, *Women and Their Work at Gretna*, 1919, p. 12.

for laboratory staff asked for 'smart, intelligent persons, with secondary education, over 18 years of age - knowledge of chemistry an advantage'.⁶⁴

Cordite was a propellant used in shells and bullets. The factory was divided into two administrative sections, Dornock, at the western end, where the mixing of the acids, nitrocotton and nitro-glycerine was performed, and Mossband where the compounds were brought together to produce cordite.⁶⁵ Cordite is a paste produced by the mixture of nitro-glycerine with nitro-cotton. The nitro-glycerine was synthesised by reacting glycerine with a mixture of nitric and disulphuric acids. Nitro-cotton was produced by mixing nitric and sulphuric acids with cotton waste. Ethanol and water was used as a solvent to mix the two components of cordite.

In the acids section, sulphuric and disulphuric acids were synthesised from sulphur dioxide, which was produced by oxidising pyrites. The material was weighed off into charging shovels, taken to the burner house and fed into specially constructed fire places. The resulting sulphur gas passed through converters and absorbers which changed it into sulphuric acid. In this section most of the workers were men, often those with previous experience of chemical processes. About 80 females measured temperatures and pressures. The second operation was the manufacture of nitric acid. White crystalline nitre, imported from South America, arrived in railway wagons and was unloaded into the nitre stores. Girls loaded the nitre into bogeys and this was fed through a mechanically operated drier. The nitre was mixed with sulphuric acid in cast iron vessels and heated over a furnace, a task performed by men. The condensed liquid was collected in huge stoneware pots and girls stirred up the mixture by means of compressed air. A subsidiary operation performed by females was washing bags of nitre to remove residue which a mechanical shaking operation had failed to eliminate. The sulphuric and nitric acid was mixed together in large tanks with mechanically

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 10. E. Ritchie, *The Gretna Girls*, p. 5.

⁶⁵ The following description of the chemical process is taken from PRO Mun5/285 HM Factory Gretna, *Description of Plant and Process*, 1918 and IWM Mun 14/8, *Women and their Work at Gretna*, 1918. See also, 'The Gretna Garrison', M. and G. Rayner-Canham, *Chemistry in Britain*, Vol. 32, No.3 March (1996).

operated stirrers. It was then pumped to the nitrocotton section. Once used, it was pumped back in a weakened condition, freshened up and used again. This denitration plant was staffed by female workers who regulated the rate of acid fed into steam towers. They also sampled and tested the product before it was reconcentrated. Overall, 45 per cent of the staff in the acids section were female.

In the nitrocotton section girls used hooks and lifting tackle to take 20 ft-high bales of compressed cotton out of the stores. Each bale weighed 448lb. These were then pushed along a runway across the road and into the cotton preparation room. The bales were lowered onto a trolley and wheeled to the bale-breaking machine. Girls cut the steel bands which held the bales together 'with an appliance like a large tin opener'. Handfuls were then thrown into the shredding machine. The cotton was dried, purified and then put into large bins. In this drying and screening area 605 females worked, mostly regulating the feed of cotton by stopping and starting electric motors. Twenty-seven men, mainly fitters and joiners, provided maintenance.

The next stage was perhaps the most hazardous because of the close contact with acids. Stoneware pans were filled with acid, and girls in this section risked being splashed by the corrosive substance. Protective aluminium hoods were used connected to suction fans to reduce the amount of fumes, 'which though non-poisonous, are very irritating to the throat and eyes'. Cotton waste was dipped into the acid bath with an aluminium rake. In the Vat House the nitrocotton was given five changes of water and boiled after each change. It was then unloaded from the vats and an overhead runway took it to the beater plates where it was reduced to a fine white pulp. The pulp was then pumped into a blending tank. Wringers dried out the pulp in bags which formed a compact cake. Sieves then broke this into a loose powder which was collected in bags and despatched to the drying stoves. The drying areas were always regarded as danger zones because of the potential for the nitrocotton to ignite. Here girls wore rubber gum boots because nails in ordinary shoes could produce sparks. The floors were also kept constantly wet through rubber hoses as another safety precaution. Girls then returned the nitrocotton to rubber bags after inspecting

them for holes or dirt which could cause an explosion. The bags were transferred by lorry to the nitro-glycerine section. Overall, 1,803 girls worked in the nitrocotton section - 94.25 per cent of the departmental total.

In the nitro-glycerine section all operations except the actual nitration process - designated as men's skilled work - was performed by girls. The glycerine was mixed with sulphuric and nitric acid in lead cylinders. The nitro-glycerine forms as an oily layer on top of the acid. This was then removed to other cylinders where remaining traces of acid were washed out and strained through sponges. It was then absorbed in the dried nitrocotton. Female duties in this section included a certain technical expertise in measuring and adjusting the strength and temperature of the glycerine and soda solution. The cooling process, done by spurting ice cold brine onto the glycerine and acid to ensure it did not rise above a certain temperature, was also performed by females, but under an engineer's supervision. They also monitored pumps and engines which produced compressed air. After the nitro-glycerine had its final washing it was poured into bags of nitrocotton. The bags were then taken to another section where they were emptied onto a paste-mixing table. Here girls worked the paste by hand through a leather sieve into bags. The 'paste train', with specially constructed vans and a fireless train, was taken to the cordite section five miles away. Overall, 1,096 females worked in the nitro-glycerine section - 86.57 per cent of the total.

Once the trains reached the cordite section at Mossband the paste was unloaded at a specially constructed platform. Girls emptied the paste bags into mechanical mixers where ether and alcohol were added. The white powder turned into a crumbly dough and this was put into bags and loaded into a steel cylinder where a hydraulic ram drove it through perforated dies. This machinery was operated by girls who then gathered up the cordite, cut it into lengths and placed it on wooden trays. This was removed by closed trucks to the drying stoves, where, after about six days, it was ready for despatch. The loading of the drying stoves was done by men. This was justified by claiming it stopped females being exposed to ether and alcohol vapours.

This seems ironic, given that no objections were placed on exposing girls to equally hazardous acid fumes in the Dornock section. The cordite section employed 6,654 females - 82.5 per cent of the total.

The work process at Gretna, therefore, was not of a uniform nature. Some girls performed unskilled heavy, physical work, others performed lighter duties but often in hazardous conditions or where the potential for accidental explosions was constant. Others performed work requiring some technical expertise, measuring or controlling temperatures and pressures or stopping and starting machinery. How were such jobs allocated, considering the young age of many of the workforce? As noted above, a significant proportion of the hostel cleaning staff may have comprised the younger girls. Ellen Lorraine's first job at Gretna was doing basic cleaning duties when she was still 15, but six months later she was transferred to presshouse work in the cordite section. There she weighed batches of cordite before it was sent for drying.⁶⁶ Other girls found themselves transferred from lighter to heavier work. Annie Corrin, from the Isle of Man, worked in the cordite section as a 19-year-old, separating cordite in trays before they were boxed and weighed. After six months she was transferred to much more physical outside work in the loading section, where she lifted boxes of cordite onto trucks. She was provided with oilskins and a sou'wester. Victoria Robertson, from Darlington, worked as a 16-year-old in the electrical department, checking and repairing light switches in various buildings before moving to the cordite section.⁶⁷ Thus younger girls appear to have been initially allocated lighter work with little responsibility involved. Girls were assessed during their first few months at the factory for their attitudes or 'responsibility' as workers. Showing responsibility at work could mean promotion, although sometimes there was an unpleasant price to pay. Emily Hubble worked in the nitro-glycerine section and was present one day when the tank began to leak. While other girls dashed for the exit

⁶⁶ E. Ritchie, *The Gretna Girls*, p. 8

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-10.

Emily attempted to stem the flow by applying sponges on a tube connected to the tank in order to prevent it spilling onto the floor. In the process she was covered in the substance: 'I was soaked in nitro-glycerine. I had to go up and have a bath. I was in torture. . . . I went to the head chemists and they thanked me and then I was made a chargehand'. Significantly, Emily was kept on at the factory when the war ended when she cleaned out tanks: 'I think you were picked for your character'.⁶⁸ In September 1916 there were 50 chargewomen in the cordite section, but no senior chargewomen or forewomen. By September 1918 there were 63 chargewomen, 30 senior chargewomen and six forewomen.⁶⁹ Such promotions were tied to ensuring that productivity of a work section remained high. Chargehands were paid a fixed wage but received bonuses for increased output from their gangs.⁷⁰ Emily Hubble's friend, Evelyn Davies, was another worker whose attitude at work defined her as suitable for more responsible positions. She started work at Gretna loading gun cotton onto trucks which were then pushed along railway lines into the mixing house. Such low-skilled work was often allocated to factory newcomers. She was eventually transferred onto the more responsible, but potentially much more hazardous work, of kneading the nitrocotton and nitro-glycerine together - 'stirring the devil's porridge', as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle termed the process. Like Emily Hubble, Evelyn Davies was also kept on at the factory after demobilisation.⁷¹

Females who prized their identity as responsible workers also tended to represent their memories of Gretna in a positive light. Even though both Emily Hubble and Evelyn Davies acknowledged the privations involved in Gretna war work, they still reconstructed their experiences in terms of responsibility and respectability. Hannah Atherton, from Spennymoor, was also promoted to chargehand after working in the

⁶⁸ Liddle Archive, University of Leeds, Item 4.

⁶⁹ PRO, LAB 5/1, Committee on Women in Industry, evidence of David Gilmour, November 16, 1918.

⁷⁰ 'Women Workers and the War,' by A Civil Engineer, *The Englishwoman*, October 1915, p. 26.

⁷¹ Liddle Archive, Item 4, tapes 303 & 306. A. Conan Doyle, 'Gretna and Eastriggs: The Miracle Towns', *AQ*, December 1, 1916.

gun cotton plant. Part of her duties involved training newcomers. She, too, retained positive memories of her time at Gretna. Thus it appears that some working-class girls were able to achieve a limited degree of social mobility or attain a position where they represented authority. However, according to Hannah Atherton, chargehands were in turn supervised by middle-class female supervisors, so their degree of autonomy was limited.⁷² Additionally, those working-class females who were given some authority did not always retain such positions in peacetime. Hannah Atherton returned to domestic service in the North-East in 1919. Emily Hubble returned home and eventually married her soldier boyfriend. This war-time 'adventure' for working-class girls came to be viewed as an aberration rather than a pathway to new possibilities. During the war, however, such 'responsible' workers were more apt to enjoy hostel life, for example, while for others the pressures to conform and lack of freedom were stifling. Nina Cooper had negative memories of her working life and of living in hostels.⁷³ She was engaged in cutting the cordite into lengths and then pushing the product in trucks 'a mile or so' to the drying section. 'It was an awful job on the trucks on a night shift - cold rain, dark and lonely, pushing the heavy trucks, and rats running round your feet.'⁷⁴

The presence of acid fumes was also vividly remembered by some workers. Nina Cooper recalled that fumes from the cordite made girls stagger, as if drunk. They were then 'taken to the sick bay to sleep it off'. Mary Ann Halliday recalled that 'whiffs of acid would keep coming over every now and again, and would fairly take your breath away'. She also blamed the acid for gum poisoning which led to her having all her teeth extracted. Cissie Cunningham left the Gretna factory when she was 17 because of health problems caused by the chemicals. She returned to Musselburgh, near Edinburgh, where she drove a tram for the rest of the war. In the

⁷² Cited in E. Ritchie, *The Gretna Girls*, p. 12.

⁷³ See Chapter 3 for the various reactions of munitions workers to hostel life.

⁷⁴ Liddle Archive, Item 8.

cordite factory at Pembrey, Gabrielle West, a member of the Women's Police Service, wrote of similar hazardous conditions in the sulphuric acid section where 'particles of acid land on your face and make you nearly mad with a feeling like pins and needles, only more so . . . ' Returning from this section made her feel 'like Dante returning from Hell'.⁷⁵

Gretna's young, single and largely migrant workforce therefore often worked in harsh and unpleasant conditions where the risk to health or even life was a constant factor. At TNT factories workers on some processes absorbed the poisonous substance through the skin, causing a yellow pallor - hence the nickname 'canary girls.' It also could turn hair into a greenish or ginger colour. Braybon and Summerfield estimate 109 deaths from toxic jaundice due to TNT poisoning from 349 cases registered. The number of women suffering long-term effects is unquantifiable.⁷⁶ Unlike TNT, cordite itself was not a health risk, but the process work involving the mixing of acids was clearly hazardous. Medical provision at Gretna was much more extensive than at smaller establishments. The factory had its own hospital with 18 beds, two male and three female doctors, a dental surgeon, an outpatients department with four nurses and a matron and three ambulances. In addition rest rooms and dressing stations were positioned throughout the factory with a qualified nurse in attendance. At other explosives factories medical provision went little beyond basic first aid. Those with minor ailments were given tonics twice a day. Production considerations were still paramount. Taking time off for medical examination was seen as costing workers money and decreasing factory staffing levels. Medical records were kept partly as an insurance policy when compensation cases were launched. Because the symptoms of TNT poisoning mimicked what were regarded as common female ailments such as digestive trouble, headaches and

⁷⁵ Ibid., Item 8. G. Routledge, 'Boom Time at Gretna', *The Scots Magazine* (1995). Interview with Cissie Cunningham, *Sunday Post*, December 26, 1999, p. 24. IWM, Dept. of Documents, 77/156/1, Diary of Miss GM West.

⁷⁶ For an extensive discussion of TNT poisoning, see Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage*, pp. 77-8, 81-86. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, Chapter. 6. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 80-84.

nervous exhaustion, factory officials were often wary of outside doctors who were more prone to diagnose mild TNT poisoning⁷⁷ At cordite factories inhaling nitric acid fumes was probably the greatest risk to health. The full effects were not felt immediately, but workers could develop an irritating cough which could lead to total collapse hours later.⁷⁸ Intoxication of ether fumes was another problem. Gabrielle West, while working for the Women's Police Service at Pembrey, witnessed the effects. 'It gives some headaches, hysteria and sometimes fits. If a worker has the least tendency to epilepsy . . . the ether will bring it out.' Although Gretna had better medical provision than most factories, evidence from workers casts doubt on its effectiveness.⁷⁹ Medical examinations were held about once a month , but the intention appears to have been primarily to check for head lice rather than to detect illness. Nina Cooper recalled that: 'You went to the medical hut about once a month to have your hair combed to keep heads clean'. This corroborates the complaints of National Federation of Women Workers secretary Mary Macarthur who thought that medical examinations were only cursory. Girls could not go to seek medical advice independently. They first had to see a welfare supervisor or hostel matron.⁸⁰ Doubtless workers were not encouraged to take time off through sickness because of concerns over production levels.

Munitions workers did die at Gretna and explosions were not unknown. Ministry of Munitions sources record at least three deaths, but this is likely to be an underestimate, given government secrecy on the subject and reports of those 'seriously injured' may have resulted in eventual deaths.⁸¹ David Mitchell estimates that 'several

⁷⁷ DL, DE 43(670), HM Factory Gretna: Programme of Inspection, May 18, 1917. IWM, Mun 26/4, Account of Work at National Amatol Factory, Aintree. MUN 5/52/300/78, Women's Trade Union Advisory Committee, November 7, 1917, March 19, 1919.

⁷⁸ D. Proud, Welfare Work, p. 104.

⁷⁹ IWM, Dept of Documents, 77/16/1, Diary of Miss G.M. West. Interview with Annie Corrin, cited in E. Ritchie, The Gretna Girls. G. Routledge, 'Boom Time at Gretna', The Scots Magazine (1995).

⁸⁰ Liddle Archive, Item 8. PRO, Lab 5/1, evidence of Mary Macarthur to Committee of Women in Industry, October 4, 1918.

⁸¹ PRO, Mun 2/22, Explosives Department weekly reports, December 9, 1916, April 7, 1917, May 26, 1917. Mun 5/158/1122.7/14, Reports of Standing Committee on Causes of Explosions, November 11, 1916, December 8, 1916 and March 27,

hundreds' died throughout the country in munitions explosions, while Woollacott thinks that a figure of 'possibly over a thousand ' is nearer the mark.⁸² Workers in the drying sections at Gretna were particularly at risk. In December 1916 a fire at the stoves killed one man and injured six others. In March 1917 local newspapers reported an explosion at Gretna 'due to accidental causes' which killed Dumfries girl Roberta Robertson and injured nine, three of whom were 'seriously injured'. Another explosion which killed at least one person was recorded at the presshouse in May 1917.⁸³ Other explosions did take place at the factory, evidence of which was recorded when newspapers publicised the awarding of honours given to munitions workers. In the January 1918 New Years Honours list it was reported that three local female workers were given war service medals. Mary Adams was honoured for courage 'in assisting others at great personal risk' during a fire. Sophia Cunningham received a medal for 'courage and high example' after an explosion. Workers who continuously exposed themselves to hazardous conditions were also rewarded. Nora Morphet was honoured for 'continuous working long hours in a poisonous atmosphere which habitually affected her health'. Two married workers were also honoured for 'courage in continuing to work in an explosives factory under grave danger'. In June 1918 Maud Bruce, a forewoman, was awarded a bravery medal for climbing on top of a drying machine and removing cotton following a fire in the drying house. Another medal was awarded to Janet Daniels for extinguishing a fire in the cordite section.. Newcastle girl Isabella Dixon and three other female workers received honours for similar action in September 1917.⁸⁴ Elsewhere in the country an explosion killed 'at least' two workers at Woolwich in September 1915. A spark from a chimney ignited five tons of explosives at a factory in Faversham in April 1916, killing 143 and

1917.

⁸² D. Mitchell, Women on the Warpath, p. 248. A. Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, p. 9.

⁸³ CJ, March 30, 1917, D&GC&H, March 28, 1917. PRO, Mun 5/158/1122.7/14.

⁸⁴ CJ, September 1, 1917, January 11 and June 18, 1918.

injuring 60. Around 20 died and 25 were seriously injured at the Barnbow Filling Factory in Leeds when a shell burst in a shop where 190 girls were working in December 1916. Possibly one of the worst explosions occurred at Ashton-under-Lyne in June 1917 when an explosion at a chemical factory also demolished a nearby cotton mill and two gasometers. Debris was found two miles away. The dying were found in nearby streets. Government estimates put the dead at 50 and more than 100 injured. Given the severity of the explosion the numbers who actually died may have been considerably more. A TNT explosion at Chilwell, near Nottingham in July 1918 killed 134 people, according to a government memo. A later press release puts the deaths at between '60 and 70, with unknown numbers injured'. It also commented on the bravery of the women involved.

Conclusion

Female workers often endured harsh conditions while producing cordite. The work was often hazardous with some jobs being physically hard while other tasks were also monotonous and repetitive. Gretna female workers did not have access to designated skilled men's work, but the checking of temperatures and control of materials still required a certain degree of expertise and powers of concentration. This was deemed to be suitable women's work because 'they are content to continue in monotonous occupations for longer periods without deteriorations in quality.'⁸⁵ Young workers were exposed to constant health risks, which, despite model medical facilities, were often regarded as secondary to the needs of production. Many workers probably paid a high price in later life for making a significant contribution to Britain's armaments production. For young teenage girls the lure of comparatively high wages and official sanction to move beyond the confines of locality and immediate family must have been an attractive proposition. However, such work, as Thom notes, had its parallels in the pre-war mobility of young domestic servants. Why the majority of female

⁸⁵ PRO, LAB 5/1, L16, evidence of David Gilmour, Gretna manager.

workers at Gretna were so young can be partly explained by the need for a single, mobile workforce who would be theoretically free of family responsibilities, particularly when local recruitment could not satisfy the demand for operatives. Employment policies for different explosives factories varied, however. Thom notes in some factories work went to steady and sensible married women while in others it went to young, single girls because of suspected gynaecological hazards.⁸⁶ Young workers, therefore, were often exposed to the most hazardous conditions. It was, additionally, a relatively cheap workforce, given that around 60 per cent of them were under 18 and therefore not on an adult wage. Gretna's teenage workforce helped to keep labour costs down. This was an important factor, given the wartime myths of government profligacy. Gretna factory officials were quick to point to the cost-effectiveness of the operation. By 1917 officials claimed the factory was working at a profit, 'large enough to pay off the huge sums of money originally laid out. No longer could it be said that a government undertaking must be more extravagant than a private concern.'⁸⁷ Although many wartime employers expressed reluctance to recruit women because of the greater outlay required in the form of welfare provision or workplace modification, the use of younger females could alleviate this extra expense.⁸⁸ Ministry of Munitions officials at Gretna may well have seen this as an added incentive to employ such a high percentage of teenage girls.

⁸⁶ D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, pp. 35-6.

⁸⁷ DL, De 43 (67) F, H.M. Factory Gretna, Description of Plant and Processes, 1918.

⁸⁸ PRO, Lab 5/1, L18, evidence of David Gilmour.

Chapter 2

Workers and Supervision

'Duty and Faithful Service'

'As the last bend was turned there came in view a pretty sight of daintily clad girls, all neat and tidy, coming from the direction of the works, but their cotton gowns and healthy appearance suggested milkmaids, and I wondered if the local Agricultural Committee had placed these girls on the land near by, but on questioning the second group I found they were all munitions girls happy, bright and gay, with just enough seriousness to add dignity to their calling, which became the importance of their work.'¹

Mrs. Ellis Chadwick's idyllic portrait of munitions workers was published in December 1916 and offered a reassuring image in the face of the uncertainty and social upheaval of wartime Britain. It implied that female industrial workers, despite their involvement in the production of weapons of war, had not been robbed of their femininity. Nor did it suggest that traditional gender roles were being transformed. Instead, continuities with a mythical past were stressed - of a rural Britain where khaki overalls, normally the uniform of the male industrial worker, could be reinvented as cotton gowns. Her use of rural imagery, with munitions workers likened to milkmaids with 'a healthy appearance' and 'daintily clad' was far from the harsh realities of life for such workers, as Chapter 1 suggested.

¹ Mrs. Ellis Chadwick, 'A Visit to a Model Munition Factory', The World's Work, December 1916, p. 60.

The writer was visiting an un-named munitions factory in the North of England where model working conditions and welfare systems were implemented. Mrs. Chadwick's article was designed to alleviate the fears of those troubled by the sight of young women working in munitions factories and apparently earning wages undreamed of before the war. Would they find a return to post-war domesticity an unattractive proposition if they came to see themselves as wage earners in their own right and not simply as dependants? Mrs. Chadwick concluded that such girls were not simply working in the armaments industry, but were being educated for their future roles as wives and mothers. Factory welfare schemes were instrumental in creating new standards for working-class girls which would reap dividends for the whole of society in the post-war world. Being subjected to factory discipline along with the benefits of sensible diets and greater access to medical facilities would make such females worthier citizens. 'A girl who has had the discipline which tends to order, cleanliness, and good food will not be content with less in her own home.' Dismissing allegations that munitions workers were spending surplus cash on fashionable clothes and accessories, Mrs Chadwick claimed that factory work was in effect reducing the coarseness of such girls. 'The absence of tawdry jewellery, showy dress, and much befrizzed hair is very noticeable . . . nothing coarse or vulgar is allowed, and even the North-country speech is softened and refined.' Being exposed to new standards of behaviour, personal appearance and cultural habits would transform such females, but only within the boundaries of existing gender identities. 'A girl who has had the advantage of doing her bit in such a factory will be a better wife and mother than if she had never soiled her hands . . . for the whole atmosphere is redolent of faithful service, and there is a high sense of duty, which is tempered with recreations.'²

Clearly in munitions areas where an amalgam of government intervention and voluntary welfare provision had been introduced, observers such as Mrs. Chadwick

² Ibid., p. 62.

had identified a situation where the workplace was seen as being the site of a transformation of young working-class women. Such workers were not only directly helping the war effort, but were being simultaneously educated for a better life once hostilities ended. If such a process was going on then it would be identifiable in such establishments as the newly-built Gretna factory where state provision of model working conditions and the introduction of a modern welfare system was an integral component of the industrial landscape.

The Meanings of Welfare

The relationship between the State and women workers during wartime was a complex one. The *raison d'être* of the Ministry of Munitions was to bring about a dramatic increase in armaments production to enable Britain to wage a successful campaign against Germany and her allies. Winning the war, therefore, was paramount. To do this however, explosives factories such as Gretna had to be organised in a way that would lead to maximum production. This meant long working hours, only achievable for female workers by removing pre-war factory legislation which had limited time at the workplace in areas such as night and Sunday work. Paradoxically, however, the wartime introduction of larger numbers of female workers into industry had led to demands for *greater* state intervention in domains such as welfare, health and safety. This was a continuation of the nineteenth century debate over industrial labour with its threats to women's reproductive roles and corrosive effect on family life. Jane Lewis notes that from the nineteenth century working-class families came under closer scrutiny by an army of voluntary organisations and state officials concerned to elicit new attitudes to domestic duties and childrearing practices.³ Anxieties that a strong and healthy race could not be built without the protection of women also fuelled the debate by the end of the century.

³ J. Lewis, *Women in England 1870-195* (Brighton, 1987), p. 12. See also P. Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (1996). S. Pedersen, *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State* (1993).

Feminist historians explain fears over a declining birthrate as an ideological weapon to define women primarily as mothers by the early twentieth century. Deborah Dwork has challenged this interpretation by insisting that it fully fails to recognise that welfare campaigns actually improved the lives of women and children and were not simply designed to control their behaviour.⁴ This debate is mirrored in the interpretation of welfare provision for munitions workers in World War I. Thom sees little concern for reproductive roles in the case of the health of TNT workers when the needs of wartime production overrode such concerns. Braybon and Summerfield also stress that welfare supervisors were often viewed by workers as being more concerned with production than with the interests of workers. Woollacott, however, claims that, overall, welfare provision improved the majority of munitions workers' lives.⁵ Welfare was an elastic term that comprised more than one component: at Gretna the system was devised to protect, educate and regulate working-class girls.

Welfare work did, in effect, involve the protection of mothers, or future mothers in the case of factories employing a predominantly young and single workforce such as Gretna. However, the need for maximum production of weapons of war was a priority. These ideological and economic factors were inextricably linked. Improved working conditions for women were deemed to be necessary in order to secure maximum output, as one Ministry of Munitions memo made clear. Gretna factory director David Gilmour told the Committee on Women in Industry in 1918 that welfare and health provision were 'necessary for efficiency'.⁶ A lecture at Gretna Institute in 1917 on 'Fatigue and the Worker', given by Professor Spooner of London Polytechnic, underlined this double message. Workers were advised not to overstrain themselves and thus reduce their capacity for work. Additionally, they should build up

⁴ A. Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop Journal*, 5, Spring, 1978, pp. 9-65. J. Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood* (1980). C. Dyhouse, 'Working Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England, 1895-1914', *Journal of Social History*, 12, 1979. S. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War* (North Carolina, 1999). D. Dwork, *War Is Good For Babies and Other Young Children* (1987).

⁵ D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls* (1998), pp. 15, 122-139. G. Braybon and P. Summerfield, *Out of the Cage* (1987), pp. 88-93. A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend* (1994), pp. 59 & 88.

⁶ PRO, Mun 4/1579, Welfare Supervision at National Projectile and Filling Factories memo. LAB 5/1, L15, evidence of David Gilmour to Committee on Women in Industry, November 16, 1918.

their physique since post-war recovery would depend on the fullest use of human resources.⁷ By 1917 working long hours was seen to be counter-productive in armaments production, so state intervention in this area was re-introduced. In September 1916 the Home Office decreed that the working week for women should be a 60-hour maximum, but should include night work. A 14-hour day was allowed, but this should include meal breaks instead of a non-stop 12-hour shift. Girls under 16, however, were still excluded from night work. From April 1917 Sunday work was also reduced.⁸ As Woollacott observes, working hours undoubtedly varied from factory to factory, but, as at Gretna, long hours of physical or monotonous work was a common feature of munitions work. Braybon and Summerfield also point out that anxieties over the health and welfare of munitions workers did not extend into other industrial areas where women worked.⁹

The Health of Munitions Workers Committee attempted to apply scientific management techniques to the problems of wartime production. In Steven Kreiss's words, the workshop and factory had become 'a laboratory' where committee officials, comprising medical experts, Home Office factory inspectors and university academics could carry out investigative work on problems such as fatigue, food and diet, ventilation, female and juvenile employment, and disease. The Committee's emphasis on the human side of production appears to be an attempt to distance itself from American scientific management techniques associated with the ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor, with its emphasis on such issues as 'time studies used for fixing piece rates'.¹⁰ In that sense, not only machinery, but actual workers could be measured and observed. The use of welfare supervisors in the munitions factory was part of this British scientific management technique. They were also observers and

⁷ Report of Professor Spooner's lecture in CJ November 27, 1917.

⁸ PRO, LAB 5/3, Cmd 136, Report on Committee on Women in Industry, 1919, p. 108.

⁹ A. Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, p. 66. G. Braybon and P. Summerfield, Out of the Cage, p. 87.

¹⁰ S. Kreiss, 'Early Experiments in British Scientific Management: The Health of Munitions Workers Committee, 1915-1920', Journal of Management History, Vol I, No.2, 1995, pp. 65-78. 'Industrial Fatigue and Efficiency': Report of the Health of Munitions Workers Committee, 1917, p. 78. See also M.J. Wiener, English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980, (1981) for English aversion to Taylorism.

measurers of girls' efficiency, behaviour and even moral standards. E.B. Voysey, in her book The Relation of Welfare Work to Scientific Management, emphasised the human factor in the world of industry where educative processes were of significance. Welfare work 'aims at assisting the individual to fulfil his functions, both *as citizen and producer* (my italics) in the interests of the community, as well as of the particular enterprise with which he is concerned'. Interestingly, by 1919, the year of the book's publication, Voysey had defined industrial work as a masculine world, in line with the demobilisation of women after the Armistice. 'The human element in the factory requires special study,' which must be 'on scientific lines' to encourage individual development.¹¹ During the War female workers were therefore not just ideologically defined as mothers or future mothers, nor just economically defined as units of production, but were also individual objects of inquiry.

Policing the Worker: Welfare Supervisors

Welfare supervision during the War offered middle-class women an occasion to create a space for feminine involvement in the world of industrial work. By 1919 there were around 700 such 'professional workers', as E.B. Voysey described them.¹² The use of the word 'professional' was particularly important for elevating the status of women. As Woollacott notes, while much of their role encompassed womanly duties such as the protection of female workers, their route to achieving recognition as serious workers was 'to conform to masculine norms of efficiency, rationality, expertise, organisation and status'.¹³ By August 1917 a group of social workers had met to form the Central Association of Welfare Workers. A meeting of the new organisation in March 1918 noted that the welfare worker was 'essentially part of the management and on a par with the accountant, engineer and other officers'. A stricter

¹¹ E.B. Voysey, The Relation of Welfare Work to Scientific Management (1919), p. 5.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ A. Woollacott, 'Maternalism, Professionalism and Industrial Welfare Supervisors in World War I in Britain', Women's History Review, Vol. 3, No.1, (1994), pp. 29-56.

definition of who was a welfare worker was required. Similarly, a two-year full-time scheme of training was needed to include office management, business administration, industrial history, economic science and sociology. Those working in factories could take the course part-time. 'Absolutely untrained and often unsuitable people' were lowering the standard. The wartime flood of women into munitions work had resulted in factories employing welfare workers with no experience of factory life and who had received a mere one day's training. Those dealing with canteens, ambulance rooms or with outside conditions could only join the association as associate members. Prospective members needed a proposer and a seconder.¹⁴

Woollacott asserts that women's entry into managerial levels through welfare work challenged the patriarchal hierarchy and traditions of business and industry.¹⁵ In that sense their adoption of the discourses of efficiency, rationality and organisation attempted to define their status as legitimate participants in the masculine world of industry. Wartime gave the opportunity for middle-class women to perform such roles, but the pre-war origins of the movement still informed their approach to the work, particularly in the area of social investigation. Quaker families like the Rowntrees and Cadburys saw welfare work as an essential part of their social reform work. The use of women for welfare work in factories in a voluntary capacity goes back to at least the early nineteenth century. Judy Lown cites the case of George Courtauld using his daughters in his Braintree, Essex, silk factory in 1809 to maintain order and ensure quality. By 1847 middle-class women were employed by the Courtaulds to run a factory evening school because of the fear that the passing of the Ten Hours Act in that year would leave workers with too much unproductive time.¹⁶ By 1893 women factory inspectors were appointed following a campaign by the

¹⁴ MRC, MSS 97/1/EC/1/1, Minute book of Institute of Personnel Management. Report of conference, Leeds, August 4-6, 1917. Executive meetings, Manchester, March 1918 and October 1918. MSS 97/3/HIS, E.T. Kelly, 'Some memories of the beginnings of industrial welfare work in England'. MSS 97/1/EC/1/2, Central Association letter to Chief Lady Inspector of Factories, June 1918.

¹⁵ A. Woollacott, 'Maternalism, Professionalism and Industrial Welfare Supervisors in World War I Britain', p. 29.

¹⁶ Cited in J. Lown, Women and Industrialization: Gender At Work in 19th Century England (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 8-10, 141.

Women's Trade Union League.¹⁷ Eleanor Kelly, in her history of welfare work, cites 1896 as the year when the first woman social worker was appointed inside a factory with responsibilities for health and recruitment. Kelly, herself, was appointed as a welfare worker to the metal box factory of Hudson Scott, in Carlisle, in 1906. Before then she had undergone two weeks training at Edward Cadbury's Bournville factory. E.B. Voysey was also employed by Hudson Scott in 1913. Welfare provision was already a component of the industrial scene in Carlisle. When the Quaker reformer J.D. Carr opened his biscuit factory in 1837 he provided a schoolroom, library, dining room and swimming baths.¹⁸

In 1913 Seebohm Rowntree convened a conference in York where the Welfare Workers Association was formed.¹⁹ When Rowntree was appointed to head the welfare section of the Ministry of Munitions in 1916 it was not surprising that those with welfare experience should become 'expert' advisers to the Ministry. In the Carlisle area, Theo Carr, chairman of Carr's factory, became chairman of the Carlisle Munitions Committee in June 1915. He also managed the small shell factory in Carlisle.²⁰ Rose Squire, from the female factory inspectorate, was appointed to the Health of Munitions Workers Committee.²¹ Ministry of Munitions welfare schemes at factories such as Gretna bore a heavy imprint of Rowntree's ideas. At his York factory before the war girls under 17 had to take three-year courses, with three hours of instruction a week in needlework, cookery, housework and gymnastics. Compulsory swimming classes were also held. Girls were also taught about infant welfare along with personal and domestic hygiene. Such classes were compulsory until the age of 18. Such welfare systems were adopted to a large degree by Gretna

¹⁷ See M. D. McFeely, *Lady Inspectors* (Oxford), 1988.

¹⁸ M. Forster, *Rich Desserts and Captain Thin's: A Family and Their Times 1831-1931* (1997), pp. 53-6.

¹⁹ MRC, MSS 97/3/HIS, E.T. Kelly's memories of welfare work history.

²⁰ M. Forster, *Rich Desserts and Captain Thin's*, p. 203.

²¹ M.D. McFeeley, *Lady Inspectors*, p. 131.

welfare officials during the war. At Gretna classes were held in singing, needlework, cookery, elocution, first aid and citizenship, along with a host of recreational and sporting pursuits.²² As Carolyn Steedman has observed, social reformers of that generation remained convinced that social investigation was the dominant means to achieve social change.²³ The legacy of social investigation left its mark in new methods of welfare work in munitions factories. Welfare workers demonstrated their modern approach to factory organisation by keeping written records of each worker. Thus at Gretna welfare staff engaged female labour, conducted interviews, entered into correspondence and kept records and files on each worker. From the moment of entrance into munitions work the female worker encountered a welfare system. Under the control of the Lady Welfare Superintendent, welfare work was divided up into administrators, factory supervisors and township supervisors. In the autumn of 1917 the welfare section comprised 79 members of staff. In addition, the employment of hostel matrons and matrons in charge of rest rooms, changerooms and messrooms increased the total to 217.²⁴

The welfare process began with the employment of labour. Management requisitions for operatives were forwarded to the Welfare Department, who authorised the Labour Exchanges to secure workers. References and medical certificates were submitted as migrant workers could not be interviewed personally. Once the applications were approved, the Employment Exchange arranged for the applicants to travel to Gretna. Welfare assistants met the girls at the stations and took them by charabanc to a Central Waiting Room. Once medically examined they were allocated to a particular shift. National Health Insurance cards were collected and ration books were handed over to the Food Control Department. Each girl was given a

²² MRC, MSS 97/3/HIS. IWM Mun 14/10, H.M. Factory Gretna: the Social and Recreational Department. See Chapter 6 for an analysis of factory-based recreation.

²³ C. Steedman, "'Public' and 'Private' in Women's Lives", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1990, p. 299.

²⁴ IWM, Mun 14/10, H.M. Factory Gretna: The Welfare Department.

book of rules, a factory pass and a housing card which showed to which hostel she had been allocated. Welfare department clerks made out record cards for filing which gave information on works section, clock number, pay rate, hostel deductions for board and lodging, age, previous employment and home address. When girls transferred to other sections, which appears to have been a common occurrence, such records also had to be amended. Records were also kept of when workers arrived or left hostels, when they were absent from work or from their living quarters. Shift Supervisors kept records of the numbers on shifts, those absent, with or without leave, those sick, new arrivals, girls leaving the factory and those requiring requisitions for clothing or cleaning materials. In turn the Chief Supervisors sent in weekly and monthly reports on each shift to the Chief Factory Assistant. Shift Supervisors were also instructed in timekeeping systems, rates of pay and the calculation of wages, along with deductions for board and lodgings or for absence from work.²⁵ The keeping of such records enabled welfare staff to assemble 'facts' about each girl's work performance: how often they turned up for work, how often they were absent or sick, whether they broke factory rules, where they lived and how much they earned. Attendance records of girls on each shift were posted in the factory so that they became public knowledge. Such records were also a factor in whether girls could be dismissed or not because of the proof of their timekeeping.²⁶ Card indexes, as one welfare supervisor proudly proclaimed, charted 'the whole subsequent history of the girl's career, from start to finish'.²⁷ Records promoted efficiency at work and could be analysed to explain production problems in a scientific way. Finding the cure for bad timekeeping was seen by some welfare workers as akin to finding a cure for an illness. Eleanor Kelly, writing in 1925, noted that 'lost time' was one of 'the diseases

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

²⁶ E.B. Voysey, The Relation of Work to Scientific Management, p. 13

²⁷ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/26, Welfare at Cardonald Projectile Factory, Glasgow, May 1916-February 1919.

of industrial life - and like every disease it must be diagnosed'.²⁸ Hence, officials of the Health of Munitions Workers Committee investigated industrial problems such as fatigue, diet and absenteeism by scientific study. At Gretna, for example, statistics were kept of average length of service for the different works sections.²⁹ Such methods, although associated with modern management techniques, had their echoes in the work of pre-war social investigation. As noted above, this is hardly surprising given the influence on wartime welfare of people such as Seebohm Rowntree.

Jacques Donzelot has stated that nineteenth century social workers, concerned with the plight of working-class children, made them not only objects of intervention, but also objects of knowledge, by studying the social context which put the child at risk.³⁰ The same could be said of wartime welfare officials, concerned with the protection of munitions workers. They studied the social context of the factory, and in doing so, made munitions workers an object of knowledge. Shift supervisors at Gretna were expected to have 'an intimate knowledge of every girl under her control'. Welfare reports spoke of a shift supervisor 'and her girls'.³¹

Like nineteenth century social investigators, welfare officials also observed working-class women. In sections of the factory where the more dangerous operations took place and where 'great attention' was required supervisors were supposed to visit once a shift. In other sections where the work was not so dangerous visits were more frequent. Welfare officials were at pains to stress that this did not slow down production, however. Supervisors did not stop to talk to the girls but gave them 'a word of encouragement here and there'. They also noted 'certain girls and how they were standing the work'. They observed the suitability of clothing worn and 'whether

²⁸ E.T. Kelly, Welfare Work in Industry (1925), p. 44.

²⁹ LAB 5/1, L25, Committee of Women in Industry, November 1918.

³⁰ J. Donzelot, The Policing of Families (New York, 1979), p. 97.

³¹ IWM, Mun 14/11, p. 5.

it was being worn with comfort'.³² There was clearly a disciplinary aspect to this, although the reports gloss over it. Such visits also enabled supervisors to see who was slacking, or absent from work. Girls were clearly graded as to their suitability for different types of work. Those involved in reading temperatures or engaged in chemical processes were selected for their intelligence, while others who performed the more physical tasks such as loading and pushing trucks were deemed to be 'especially strong'.³³ As this was more likely to be outside work performed by less reliable girls and potentially giving greater scope for slacking, it is quite possible that supervisors visited these locations more frequently. In any case, girls working in such sections must have felt that they were being kept under observation closely and probably resented it. Welfare supervisors were also in charge of maintaining discipline in the changerooms and canteens. How well supervisors 'knew' their girls is debatable. The priority at Gretna appears to have been to ensure the enforcement of factory regulations, particularly important at a cordite factory. This must have brought them into conflict at times. Astonishingly, welfare reports at the factory could describe the girls' work there as 'neither difficult or arduous', a surprising description given the hazards involved in certain processes and the heavy, physical work performed by those in other sections, as noted in Chapter 1. What was required, however, at all times was 'implicit obedience to regulations'.³⁴ When welfare officials helped girls with wage queries or ensured they received adequate protective clothing this must have been appreciated, but there were many other areas where the potential for disharmony was high. Woollacott cites the example of Lilian Barker at Woolwich Arsenal as an example of an enlightened welfare official who appears to have formed a relationship with the workforce, probably because she came from a working-class background. However, as Braybon and Summerfield point out, Barker was not above

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

criticising workers' dress sense and urging them not to waste money on frivolities.

When welfare workers interfered in non-work matters conflict was a real possibility.

³⁵ In September 1915 500 girls in the packing department at Carr's factory in Carlisle went on strike in protest at their treatment by the works matron. Three girls asked for time off on a Saturday. The matron refused but the girls did not turn up for work and were sacked on return. The strikers demanded the girls be reinstated and for the matron to be sacked. The girls marched out of the factory, went to the matron's house, hammered on her door, pulled up flowers and threw them at the window. This incident appears to be a result of a long-standing resentment of the matron. Theo Carr accepted the matron's enforced resignation, called a meeting with the girls, who subsequently returned to work. The matron had apparently attempted to oversee the morals of the girls and interfere in their life outside work. ³⁶

The ambiguity of the welfare supervisor's position in the factory has been noted. ³⁷ It must have been a difficult task trying to represent the interests of the workforce, while simultaneously being in a quasi-managerial capacity and heavily concerned in ensuring industrial efficiency. Successful welfare supervisors were those deemed to 'combine sympathy, kindness and tact with firmness and discrimination'. ³⁸ The question of authority was paramount. Class was an important way of demonstrating this authority. ³⁹ Certainly middle-class and upper-class women dominated the ranks of welfare supervisors. At Gretna 'educated trained women' were required to fulfil this role. ⁴⁰ Some had previous social work, nursing or teaching experience. Miss N.E.

³⁵ Woollacott, 'Maternalism, Professionalism and Industrial Welfare Supervisors', pp. 41-2. Braybon and Summerfield, Out of the Cage, p. 90.

³⁶ M. Forster, Rich Desserts and Captain Thin's, p. 99.

³⁷ See, for example, Braybon and Summerfield, Out of the Cage, p. 88. Woollacott, 'Maternalism, Professionalism and Industrial Welfare Supervisors.'

³⁸ IWM, Mun 14/11, p. 5.

³⁹ It is noticeable that even though historians who differ on the degree of social change happening in munitions factories in wartime all agree on this point. See Woollacott, 'Maternalism, Professionalism and Industrial Welfare Supervisors', p. 4, Braybon and Summerfield, Out of the Cage, pp. 88-91.

⁴⁰ IWM, Mun 14/11, p. 1.

Smith, the welfare supervisor at the Openshaw Works in Manchester had been educated at the Bedford School of Economics and done voluntary social work before the war, as well as working as a librarian. Ella Renaud, the head supervisor at the Globe Works, Gateshead, was a French professor who had been educated privately, including a spell at the Sorbonne. She had also, however, 10 years' experience of organising maternity and infant welfare work in Newcastle. Miss J. R. Roberts, a welfare organiser at the Scotswood works in Newcastle, had been a surgical and medical nurse. Miss J. M. McLeish, a supervisor at Derwenthaugh and Co had been a science and mathematics mistress at Perth Academy and the Edinburgh School of Cookery and Domestic Sciences. Catherine Borland had gone into welfare work after doing research in medieval history for the Carnegie Trust. Other supervisors had less obvious qualifications, apart from their class. Miss G. F. Panter-Downes was a welfare supervisor at the Elswick factory in Newcastle, although her only previous experience was as a volunteer nurse. She listed her pre-war pursuits as riding, hunting and attending horse shows. Other supervisors worked as machinists in factories before going into welfare work. Adeline Fallding Farquharson began the war as a probationer nurse, worked in an aeroplane workshop at Gosforth before becoming head supervisor at a Blackpool factory. Before the war she had chaired the Committee to Encourage Gardening Among Artisans and been organist at Doncaster Parish Church.⁴¹ Probably some welfare workers of a lower status, such as those in charge of messrooms and changerooms were from a lowlier background.

Welfare workers, therefore, claimed authority by their class and by their identification with rational management techniques that claimed quasi-scientific status and denoted the identity of professionalism, usually associated with male workers. Another important factor was age, particularly at explosives factories such as Gretna with its high proportion of young, single female workers. Welfare workers' maternalism was still a highly significant part of their authority. Having, what

⁴¹ See IWM, Mun 24/15, for the backgrounds of welfare supervisors.

Woollacott calls 'a matronising attitude', is highly evident in welfare workers' intervention into girls' personal appearance and behaviour and outside interests.⁴² The prevalence of such instances demonstrates it was an area on which welfare workers thought they should encroach. At Gretna, where so many of the workforce were migrant workers, away from parental control, this aspect was of prime importance. Welfare work there was all-encompassing, probably much more so than at shell filling and projectile factories. It was not just a matter of work supervision, but of 'responsibility of their care . . . in their home lives as well'.⁴³ Such women, therefore, were substitute mothers, training, correcting and advising girls: age difference mattered in terms of authority. Working-class girls were brought up to respect their elders and to be trained for future roles as wives and mothers.⁴⁴ Welfare workers continued this role in wartime, ensuring that girls dressed and behaved properly and were educated in 'womanly' duties such as sewing and cooking. The intention was to make the factory not only a place of work but a site of domesticity where 'members of a united family' resided.⁴⁵ Welfare workers attempted to combine nineteenth century moral authority with a newer professional authority, but in both elements the question of age and class still underpinned assumptions behind the basis of their power.

Additionally, there was an educative aspect to welfare work. Cecile Matheson, writing in the journal of the Women's Industrial Council in 1917, likened the welfare official to a teacher. Doubtless, she was attempting to draw a parallel to emphasise the professionalisation of the role, but the educative process was an important feature of the work. The potential for disorder at work among young girls was likened to the potential for disorder in the school: 'How many schoolgirls have other things to do when the teacher is absent, often out of sheer bravado! '. Middle-class women could

⁴² Woollacott, 'Maternalism, Professionalism and Industrial Welfare Supervisors', p. 40.

⁴³ IWM, Mun 14/11, p1. See the following chapters for supervision in hostels and at places of entertainment.

⁴⁴ See C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (1981). A. Davin, *Growing Up Poor* (1996).

⁴⁵ L.K. Yates, *The Woman's Part: A Record of Munitions Work* (1918), p. 8.

perform this teaching role in the industrial world and open up a new career for themselves. The male employer 'has no time to study the health, ailments, psychology and traditions of the countless girls whom he employs. Given that he wants to treat them fairly he really needs a woman to help him and take the burden of understanding their needs and desires off him and his foremen'. Welfare workers would 'give the girls themselves a lead in the struggle towards maturity'. It was a task akin to public duty and welfare workers were 'drawn mainly from the highest-minded among all classes of English women'. Such pioneering work might not yet be fully appreciated, but Matheson was hopeful that 'the mothers of the girls, will, in the long run, be the staunchest supporters of the innovation'. Once away from the home, working-class girls would be subject to the restraining influence of welfare workers. Matheson thought that working-class mothers would:

'be glad that someone will support her daughter in her effort not to succumb to evil talk and foul insinuation, to the temptation to join in drinking parties or in pleasures that look harmless to the high-spirited girl and are full of peril. She will be glad to know that her girl works in a factory where a woman tries to check the contamination of vermin, to detect illness in its early symptoms, and to enforce a standard of decency and cleanliness that is in accord with the upbringing of her daughter.'⁴⁶

Welfare work was an innovation, but when advocates justified the role they clearly resorted to pre-war discourses of middle-class women's moral authority and their innate suitability to protect young girls. Wartime female workers were sometimes regarded as children lost in an adult world and in constant need of supervision. The manager of the Cotton Powder Co told the Committee on Women in Industry that 'you

⁴⁶ C. Matheson, 'Welfare Work: Another View', Women's Industrial News, July 1917, p. 9.

cannot allow bodies of women to wander about a factory. You have to see that they have people with them to see that they go where they should go'.⁴⁷

Trade Unions

Trade union officials and welfare workers were in direct competition for workers' allegiances, as Deborah Thom notes. This competition, she maintains, could also result in a union becoming more like a welfare organisation, concerning itself with every aspect of workers' lives. Thom cites the case of a Workers Union poster proclaiming; 'All the handsome boys and all the beautiful girls are joining the WU.' This emphasis on the social side might be taken to indicate a belief that female munitions workers were temporary workers and not taken, or encouraged to be taken, seriously.⁴⁸ Emphasising the social side, however, was nevertheless seen as a highly effective tactic in recruiting young workers. Women did join unions during wartime in greater numbers. Female membership of unions was around 183,000 in 1910 and had doubled by 1914. At the end of 1918 there were 1,086,000 female unionists - 17 per cent of all members, according to Barbara Drake.⁴⁹ Female munitions workers were largely recruited by unions representing unskilled or semi-skilled workers. The National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW), who organised female munitions workers before the war, increased their membership from 10,164 in 1914 to around 70,000 members in 1918, drawn from engineering and allied trades. The National Union of General Workers (NUGW) increased their female membership from 4,000 to 60,000 between 1914 and 1918. Around 80,000 women were in the Workers Union (WU) in 1918, around 25 per cent of the membership, as opposed to 7,500 in 1914. The National Amalgamated Union of Labour's (NAUL) female membership rose from 176 in 1914 to 35,000 in 1918.⁵⁰ Even though these figures are impressive

⁴⁷ PRO, LAB 5/1, S62, evidence of Mr. Todhunter, Cotton Powder Co.

⁴⁸ D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 116.

⁴⁹ B. Drake, *Women in Trade Unions* (1920) (1984 repr), p. 50.

⁵⁰ PRO, Mun 5/71/324/36, Report of Women's Employment Committee, Cd 9239, 1919, p. 95. LAB 5/1, Meeting of Committee

it should not be forgotten that around two-thirds of female munitions workers were not union members. G.D.H. Cole noted that the two main characteristics of wartime women workers were that they were weakly organised and poorly paid.⁵¹

Undoubtedly, male opposition to the recruitment of women was a significant factor as well as employer opposition.⁵² However, as Clare Wightman points out, skilled craft unions such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers were particularly averse to recruiting women because of the fear that dilution would erode hard-won rights and privileges. Thus gender ideology was not the sole factor in explaining union opposition to women workers. Employers, too, were reluctant to incur extra expenditure on welfare, accommodation and special lifting and conveyancing appliances that might conceivably be for wartime production only. Women's wartime employment was concentrated in government controlled factories and national factories where dilution was compulsory.⁵³ The ASE's tactical alliance with the NFWW whereby the latter would withdraw its members from jobs claimed by the ASE after the war in return for recruiting and negotiating assistance can be seen as confirming the ideology that women were still temporary workers and primarily dependent wives and daughters. However, as Wightman pertinently points out, it seemed a sensible position at the time, given that no-one would argue that workers who had fought for the nation should not be allowed to return to their jobs after the war.⁵⁴

General labour unions, such as the WU and NUGW recruited women in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. Kozak sees this as a tactic designed to protect male labour from

on Women in Industry, October 1918. N. Seldon, Women in Trade Unions (1978), p. 85. R. Hyman, The Workers Union (Oxford, 1971), p. 87.

⁵¹ G.D.H. Cole, Trade Unionism and Munitions (Oxford, 1923), p. 51. S.J. Horowitz, State Intervention in Great Britain (1949) (1969 edn), p. 138.

⁵² See, for example, Braybon and Summerfield, Out of the Cage, p. 47-56. G. Braybon, Women Workers in the First World War, 1981.

⁵³ C. Wightman, More Than Munitions: Women, Work and the Engineering Industries 1900-1950 (1999), Chapter 3.

⁵⁴ Braybon, Women Workers in the First World War. Wightman, More Than Munitions, p. 54.

being undercut by low paid, unorganised women workers.⁵⁵ Again, the balance between ideological concern about the role of women and the economic reality of needing to recruit female members is complex. The WU chairman, John Beard, in a speech to his union's national conference in July 1916, acknowledged that women's first duty was to motherhood and the care of the young, and that female workers should not be used to lessen male wage rates. However, male opposition to female workers would not change the current situation. He warned members: 'To talk of excluding women from occupations they are able to prove themselves fitted for is to shirk a pressing problem, and to oppose them as workmates can have no more hope of success than the Luddite agitation against the introduction of machinery'. Women were going to be 'responsible for an amazing increase in the powers of production, and she is going to be on our side.' Charles Duncan, the WU's general secretary, thought it was the union's 'imperative duty' to organise women and that it was a waste of time discussing whether they will remain in workshops: 'They are there now'.⁵⁶ Organising women workers also had a welfarist/protectionist dimension. Beard thought females engaged in heavy manual work 'become very low and degraded and their children suffer from it'. It led to 'a deterioration of character'. WU and NUGW members were more likely to be engaged in such work. G.D.H. Cole also believed that girls were performing 'undesirable heavy work' and called for state legislation to bar them from such jobs. Dr. Janet Campbell, a medical adviser on the Health of Munitions Workers Committee, thought such work would have 'very bad social effects'.⁵⁷

Social reformers, medical experts, trade unionists and advocates of state intervention all approved of protectionist measures for young female workers. The

⁵⁵ M. Kozak, 'Women Munitions Workers During the First World War', PhD thesis, Hull University, 1976, p. 309.

⁵⁶ MRC, MSS 126/WU/4/2/1, WU Record, July 1916, report of John Beard's address to the First Triennial Conference, pp. 6-7. MSS 126/WU/4/1/11, WU annual report, 1915, p. 9

⁵⁷ PRO, LAB 5/1, Committee on Women in Industry, October 1918, J14, J28, R 30-1, evidence of John Beard, John Jones, G.D.H. Cole and J. Campbell.

divergence of opinion was often centred on which organisations should be concerned with this issue. The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations protested in May 1917 about the extension of employer welfare systems which seek 'control over the private lives of the workers'. They advocated trade union committees to look after workers' interests and local authority provision of canteens and hostels, run in co-operation with trade unionists. The Committee did not wish to see employers acting as 'universal providers'.⁵⁸

Gretna Workers and Trade Unionism

At Gretna trade union membership of the female workforce is impossible to estimate accurately. It is only safe to assume that, reflecting national trends, most of the workforce was non-unionised. However, because most of the work involved either unskilled, physically taxing work or repetitive process work, it is not surprising that the general labour unions were most effective in recruiting members. Unions with female membership at Gretna included the Workers Union, National Union of General Workers and the National Amalgamated Union of Labour. The NAUL had a tradition of recruiting chemical workers, although, overall, the industry had never been a particularly fruitful area.⁵⁹ The WU quickly began recruiting male construction workers in 1915 when the factory was being built and so were theoretically handily placed to recruit female operatives once they arrived. However, a women's branch was not set up in Dumfries until November 1917. Most female trade unionists were members of the NUGW and NAUL, with a handful of National Federation of Women Workers members.⁶⁰ The last were mainly from the Newcastle area and had previously been NFWW members before coming to Gretna. The NFWW attempted a recruitment campaign in the area in October 1916. Mary Macarthur, the

⁵⁸ Cited in B. Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, p. 103.

⁵⁹ PRO, Mun 5/71/324/36, Cd 9239, Report of Women's Employment Committee, 1919, pp. 103-5.

⁶⁰ MRC, MSS 126/WU/4/1/11, WU annual report, 1915, pp. 46-7. PRO, Mun 7/259, Ministry of Munitions correspondence on trade unions at Gretna.

NFWW secretary, wrote to the Ministry of Munitions asking for a permit to enter the factory to talk to the operatives. The Ministry refused the application, telling Macarthur that an existing committee already dealt with 'internal affairs'. This was the male-dominated Gretna and District Joint Societies Committee which represented 16 unions covering painters, construction workers, masons, electricians, plumbers, engineers, machinists and carpenters. Macarthur was critical of this committee, complaining that it did not represent female workers as there were no women representatives. The NUGW eventually had two female representatives on the committee, each representing 300 members. This suggests that the NUGW had around 600 female members at Gretna. If the NAUL had around the same numbers of female members, given that these were the two most successful in recruiting women at Gretna, then this gives a figure of 1,200. If the WU had less members and the NFWW only a handful, then the maximum number of female unionists would be around 2,000 and this is probably an optimistic estimate. It does, however, tend to agree with national estimates of two-thirds of female munitions workers being non-unionised.⁶¹

Mary Macarthur's letter to the Ministry of Munitions clearly gave officials cause for concern. Probably they were worried about NFWW propaganda relating to the hazards of cordite production. Christopher Addison, under-secretary at the Ministry of Munitions, had 'admonished' NFWW delegates for holding meetings in Coventry and telling workers that TNT would turn internal organs yellow and make them barren.⁶² A ministry memo noted that the townships of Gretna and Eastriggs were 'open' so the NFWW could not be legally prevented from canvassing there. In the end a NFWW official was given a works pass to observe working conditions and find out whether women were paid the same rates as those at the Pembrey explosives factory in Wales, but she was accompanied by Ministry officials during the inspection. Continued

⁶¹ Ibid., correspondence regarding Gretna trade unions.

⁶² C. Addison, Four And A Half Years, Vol. I (1934), p. 261.

requests by the NFWW appear to have led Ministry officials to call for female representation on the Joint Standing Committee, although, it was noted, it need not be NFWW representation.⁶³ This seems to have resulted in the appointment of two NUGW female representatives onto the committee. This suggests some sort of collusion between the Ministry and the NUGW in a tactical bid to marginalise the NFWW. There was certainly some inter-union antagonism over recruiting female workers.⁶⁴ The NFWW's tactical alliance with the ASE added to suspicion of the former among the general unions.⁶⁵ When the NFWW applied for affiliation to the National Federation of General Workers in 1918 they were denounced as 'tools of the ASE'. The vote was lost by 16 to two.⁶⁶ The NFWW were eventually granted a permit to hold meetings in Gretna and Eastriggs and to visit girls in the hostels. Whether the recruitment campaign was successful or not is unclear.⁶⁷

Gretna officials also instigated an alternative system to by-pass union influence among female workers. This was the 'workers' delegates' scheme, instigated by management to discuss grievances. Two females and one male from each shift acted as delegates. The system appears to have been implemented following the NFWW agitation in the area. Management could represent the delegate system as giving a voice to female operatives when the predominantly male Joint Committee seemed to ignore it. Joint deputations of the union committee and workers' delegates sometimes met with management at meetings. Such a system was advocated by Eleanor Kelly as a means of reducing industrial disputes. In her book on industrial welfare Kelly suggested setting up works committees 'where management and workers meet together to discuss the things which concern them both'. This would involve 'an

⁶³ PRO, Mun 7/259, Ministry of Munitions letter, April 18, 1917.

⁶⁴ See, for example, H.A. Clegg, A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889, Vol. II (Oxford, 1985), p. 199.

⁶⁵ B. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, p. 185.

⁶⁶ MRC, MSS 126/NFGW/4/1/1, Minutes for year ending June 1918, p. 9.

⁶⁷ PRO, Mun 7/259.

exchange of confidence - not a dominance of one section over another'. Foremen and forewomen must be sympathetic to the scheme. Workers must not think there was an ulterior motive behind such a system.⁶⁸ The Gretna example, however, demonstrated the reluctance of workers to accept management-imposed schemes. By November 1917 a ministry memo conceded that the workers' delegates system was 'defunct.' Some sections even no longer held meetings.⁶⁹

Gretna's female workforce were, therefore, often non-unionised, but also indifferent to alternative employer schemes. A welfare supervisor commented that 'they are generally contented and not prone to agitation over unimportant working conditions. They have great faith in the integrity of their employers and so long as there is justice done they remain satisfied'. A Dumfries minister, who worked among the workforce, remarked that although girls often grumbled 'one could not imagine a strike in Timber Town. The record of the place has not been blotched by such turbulence as is reported from other munitions areas.'⁷⁰ Similarly, trade union official records and journals make no reference to any significant industrial dispute at Gretna. Woollacott attributes this lack of industrial action to Gretna's model working conditions and extensive welfare facilities. Nationally, however, women's strike activity was far below that of men.⁷¹ However, there were some industrial disputes involving female workers. Around 6,000 women struck for higher wages at Armstrong Whitworth's Scotswood factory in Newcastle in March 1916. The dispute was settled in their favour by tribunal and the women returned 'flush with success and inclined to take charge,' as welfare supervisor Ethel Jayne ruefully noted.⁷² Chemical

⁶⁸ E.T. Kelly, Welfare Work in Industry, pp. 8-12.

⁶⁹ PRO, Mun 7/259, November 1917 memo.

⁷⁰ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/8, Women and their Work at H.M. Factory Gretna, 1919, p. 33. CN, July 28, 1917, 'Timber Town - A Happy Community of Girls.'

⁷¹ Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, p. 104.

⁷² IWM, Mun 24, Welfare Work at Armstrong-Whitworth's.

workers in particular were noted for their lack of militancy. Mr. I.W. Stuart of the Chemical Employers Federation told the Committee on Women in Industry that during the war there had never been any labour trouble with women workers.⁷³ Some male trade unionists believed that employers preferred women workers because of their supposed subservience.⁷⁴ At Gretna it would appear docility and deference to authority, therefore, was a feature of the workforce. The next section examines the accuracy of such an assessment.

A Docile Workforce?

Young girls were expected to defer to parents and curb exuberance from an early age, with their elders versing them in the codes of respectability. At a later age domestic service was seen as an ideal training for domesticity, subservience and deference.⁷⁵ Many munitions factories also welcomed servants for their presumed 'superior intelligence and physical fitness'. Pre-war servants also found munitions work more remunerative, although many preferred clerical or shop work.⁷⁶ Gretna had a sizeable proportion of ex-servants - 36 out of every hundred workers. A further 44 per cent had also worked before, mainly in factories. Girls with industrial experience were often depicted as 'rough,' 'noisy' or 'flirts.'⁷⁷ Additionally, they often appeared confident and less deferential to middle-class observers. Judy Lown makes this point by citing Mrs. Gaskell's depiction of northern mill girls who came 'rushing along with bold, fearless faces, and loud laughs and jests, particularly aimed at all those who appeared to be above them in rank or station. The tones of their unrestrained voices and their carelessness of all common rules of street politeness frightened Margaret a little at

⁷³ PRO, LAB 5/1, Committee on Women in Industry, October 29, 1918, S25, evidence of I.W. Stuart.

⁷⁴ See, for example, ASE Monthly Journal, September, 1916, for attack on the use of female labour.

⁷⁵ C. Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, p. 83. L. Davidoff, M. Doolittle, J. Fink and K. Holden, The Family Story (1999), Chapter 6.

⁷⁶ PRO, LAB 5/3, Report on Committee on Women in Industry, Cmd 136, 1919, p. 99.

⁷⁷ For comments on factory girls, see the examples cited in J. Lewis, Women in England, pp. 184-5.

first.⁷⁸ Lown sees this as an emerging stereotype of the female millworker, displaying both potential danger and degeneracy and as an upright vanguard of the lower orders.⁷⁹ It might be added that this was additionally the sign of youthfulness with its display of high spirits threatening to spill over into rebelliousness. This nineteenth century fear of and fascination with factory girls was still much in evidence during World War I. Social philanthropists who formed women police patrols to protect and regulate Gretna munitions workers did so because so many of them were northern factory girls.⁸⁰ Commentators on this influx of working-class girls used similar imagery to that of Mrs Gaskell, 60 years before. The Rev. J.M. Little wrote: 'They go out to their ugly work arm in arm, singing and joking with one another and return in the same high spirits.' And yet the Rev. Little also acknowledged a feature which troubled some contemporaries. 'It goes without saying that in a factory employing 9,000 young women gathered at express speed from the four winds there are certain to be not a few of poor morale, of little sense of shame and less sense of honour.' A girl like this was the sort who 'sits most loosely to home' and 'who answered the call for workers as soon as it was made'. The Rev. Little added that welfare officials could be trusted to weed out the work-shy or disruptive elements, 'and without doubt the tone of Timber Town has risen and will rise'.⁸¹ What this implies is that in the attempt to recruit as swiftly as possible, 'rough' girls were recruited alongside 'respectable' girls.' The article was written more than a year after recruitment began, but Ministry of Munitions officials were still complaining of a 'shortage of women' in March 1917.⁸² Interestingly, the Rev. Little equated 'rough girls' with those who were not content to remain in the home, implying that 'respectable' girls would not be

⁷⁸ E. Gaskell, *North and South* (1855) (1970 edn), p. 110, cited in Lown, *Women and Industrialization*, p. 43.

⁷⁹ Lown, *Women and Industrialization*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 7 for the policing of munitions workers.

⁸¹ *CN*, July 28, 1917.

⁸² PRO, Mun 2/22, Department of Explosives report, March 3, 1917.

performing such 'ugly work' if not for their zeal to serve the nation in wartime. Fears about the corruption of respectable girls were also raised by Dorothea Proud in her book on welfare work. Welfare staff were needed to weed out undesirable girls, hence the need to conduct proper interviews through accepted channels such as Labour Exchanges.⁸³ Welfare officials, in an attempt to distance themselves from voluntary social workers, often complained that such women divided workers up into 'nice girls' and 'rude girls,' but some professional welfare workers did exactly the same thing. Supervisors at Gretna certainly graded workers as to suitability for certain types of accommodation in an attempt to isolate those seen as disruptive.⁸⁴ Church of Scotland social workers visiting Gretna also noticed the workers came from varied backgrounds. 'They are mainly young women, some with industrial experience in low-paid, unskilled work. They are drawn from city communities where their social outlook has been of a most circumscribed character.' They were 'a remarkable mixture of girls . . . some of them very fine girls - and, of course, there are others'.⁸⁵

The dangerous environment of an explosives factory like Gretna meant there were a host of regulations prohibiting the bringing in of potentially combustible objects. The responsibility of enforcing such regulations was often the job of the women police. Towards the end of 1916 the Women's Police Service (WPS) was contracted by the Ministry of Munitions to patrol factories at Queensferry, Waltham Abbey, Pembrey and Gretna. The WPS had their largest number of members on duty at Gretna, numbering 167 at its peak in June 1918.⁸⁶ Like welfare supervisors, their sphere of influence and relationship with the workforce extended to the regulation of workers' lives inside and outside the factory. The WPS were also of an older

⁸³ D. Proud, Welfare Work (1917), p. 119.

⁸⁴ See comments of Lilian Barker, Lady Superintendent at Woolwich, on 'irritating' voluntary workers in IWM, Mun 48/2. See Chapter 3 for discussion of hostels and lodgings for workers.

⁸⁵ D&GC&H, March 17, 1917, 'Work Among Munitions Girls.'

⁸⁶ PRO, HO 45/10806/309485, Agreement between Ministry of Munitions and the WPS, January 1917. M. Allen, The Pioneer Policewoman (1925), p. 61.

generation and predominantly middle or upper-class.⁸⁷ Their duties included searching female workers and examining passes at entrance gates, patrolling danger areas, enforcing factory regulations and searching for stolen private and factory property. Like the munitions workers, they worked a three-shift system.⁸⁸ Judging by the experiences of Gabrielle West, a WPS member who worked at the explosives factory at Pembrey, their authority was often questioned by female workers. Clearly, groups of working-class girls did not always display deference to authority. West wrote in her diary that 'for a police woman to as much show herself was a signal for all the girls to shout rude remarks and worse'. Some girls had threatened to duck an unpopular sub-Inspector, who had a basin of dirty water thrown over her. In another incident, when policewomen tried to eject girls from the canteen in an attempt to get them to return to work, threats were made 'to down the first constable who came near them'. The girls eventually returned to work one-and-a-half-hours later. At Gretna, too, there were challenges to authority. A 19-year-old was admonished at a munitions tribunal for refusing to obey a chargehand. She had refused to work with the chargehand 'because she orders us about and is sarcastic'.⁸⁹

Gabrielle West thought there were a number of 'rough lots' on her shift, including girls from the Rhondda 'full of socialistic theories and very great on getting up strikes'. West, who also worked at a filling factory in Hereford in 1917, helped to break up a mass brawl between English and Irish girls after the latter had sung Sinn Fein songs 'and made offensive remarks about Tommies. The English girls replied in kind.' When West later moved to an Avonmouth factory ethnic conflict also surfaced. One Irish girl had to be locked in the WPS office 'because the others wanted to lynch her'.⁹⁰ Thom asserts such incidents may well have been rare, although it does

⁸⁷ See Chapter 7 on the subject of policing public behaviour and class and age differences between the women police and munitions workers.

⁸⁸ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, pp. 61-2. IWM, Emp 43/102, HM Factory Gretna: The Day's Work of the Policewomen.

⁸⁹ *CJ*, May 8, 1917.

⁹⁰ IWM, Dept. of Documents, 77/156/1, Diary of Miss G.M. West, 1916-17.

illustrate the variety of experiences within war work.⁹¹ Ethnic tensions were also close to the surface at Gretna, as is apparent in comments made by Emily Davies and Mrs. Burton.⁹² This is hardly surprising, given the variety of backgrounds of Gretna workers. Probably such tensions were more likely to raise themselves in verbal, rather than physical abuse, but violence was an experience of some workers. When Peggy Hamilton, from a well to do family with their own shipping business, trained as a toolmaker in a Birmingham factory, local female workers greeted her by pouring steel shavings on her and throwing oil-soaked cotton waste. Later she was picked on by 'a hefty lass called Hilda', who threw breakfast scraps at her and then pulled her backwards off her chair. The pair went outside and wrestled on the floor to the delight of other workers. Hamilton recalled the incident in her memoirs 'as an amusing diversion'.⁹³ It seems hard to believe that was the only emotion she felt at the time. Was this a case of class resentment or anger at privileged outsiders being trained for higher paid work? Probably both reasons entered the equation. Conflict between those on the same shift could also arise. A young Gretna worker was taken to court and fined for assault. The girl had seized a workmate by the throat, pulled her away from her friends, hit her in the face and knocked her down on the ground. In her defence the girl said that her workmate had earlier given her a bloody nose at work.⁹⁴ Not all young women kept within the boundaries of traditional ideas of femininity.⁹⁵

Countering the monotony or rigours of work, as well as thumbing a nose at authority was also achieved by 'larking about', a common ploy of children at school and often carried over into shopfloor culture.⁹⁶ Mary Allen's memoirs of the

⁹¹ D. Thom, Nice Girls and Rude Girls, p. 36.

⁹² Liddle Archive, Items 4 & 25.

⁹³ P. Hamilton, Three Years or the Duration, (1978), p. 52.

⁹⁴ D&GC&H, February 24, 1917, 'Munitions Girls Fall Out.'

⁹⁵ For illuminating examples of working-class girls' aggression, see A. Davies, ' "These Viragoes Are No Less Cruel Than the Lads": Young Women, Gangs and Violence in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford', The British Journal of Criminology, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1999, pp. 72-89. See also G. Pearson, Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears (1983), pp. 89-92.

⁹⁶ See S. Humphries, Hooligans Or Rebels (1981) Chapter 5. For a contemporary description of factory pranks, see A. Williams, Life In a Railway Factory (1915), pp. 237-8.

Women's Police Service contain references to the large amount of 'larking' done in munitions factories. This was frowned upon because in explosives factories like Gretna 'it could lead to carelessness at work and possible fatal results'. Clamping down on such practices was clearly part of the drive towards efficient production. She noted that 'girls hid away in all sorts of strange places or tried to escape from the shops on all manners of trivial pretexts'. Young workers were also told off for fraternising with the opposite sex at work 'to discourage immorality'. Boys and girls 'skylarking' was also a source of complaint by management at the filling factory at Abbey Wood.⁹⁷ Clamping down on coarse language was also attempted. Some girls were even prosecuted for using bad language.⁹⁸ Annan Presbyterian minister the Rev. William Peebles, a fierce opponent of state welfare provision for workers, complained about the 'lax moral tone' of the Gretna factory and 'the scribbling of vile words and phrases on walls'.⁹⁹ Larking about and openly defying authority often went hand in hand. In one munitions factory several girls were brought before a munitions tribunal for refusing to obey orders and creating a disturbance. Their foreman complained he had been insulted and sworn at by one girl. The girls had stayed in a messroom after midnight dinner by a few minutes. When they heard the foreman coming to find them they all pretended to be asleep. One girl, half lying down on a bench, snored out loud. The foreman pushed her roughly and the girl reacted. In evidence the girl maintained she did not swear but said he was 'no man if he put his hand on me'. The foreman told the girl to go home and stay there if she spoke to him like that again. The girls all refused to work if she couldn't. They put on their hats and coats but remained in the factory, creating a disturbance and trying to persuade other workers to join them. The girls were heavily fined.¹⁰⁰ This case and the incident

⁹⁷ M. Allen, The Pioneer Policewoman, p. 66 & 72-3. PRO, LAB 5/1, D64, evidence of Abbey Wood Filling Factory manager.

⁹⁸ M. Allen, The Pioneer Policewoman, pp. 66 & 72-3. Woman Worker, October 1916, p. 5.

⁹⁹ D&GC&H, February 9, 1918.

¹⁰⁰ Woman Worker, October 1916, p. 5.

mentioned by Gabrielle West, where girls refused to return to work following a grievance, suggest that female workers took part in disputes which could suddenly flare up because of a perceived injustice done to a work colleague. This suggests that, although often not in trade unions, some female workers had a collective identity that revolved around friends and immediate workmates. Relationships were important. Workers were more considerate of colleagues on the same shift, but tended to show less respect for other shift's possessions.¹⁰¹ The manager of one munitions factory noted that when a girl was dismissed her friend often left too and that when one girl took time off so did her friend. Having a collective identity was also shown by the wearing of flowers in overalls, each section, or even individual shifts, often adopting a different type. L.K. Yates noticed that girls in the cartridge and bullet section of munitions factories all wore distinctive, brightly-coloured oriental handkerchiefs.¹⁰²

This 'irrational' behaviour whereby girls left work because close friends had left, was clearly at odds with rational scientific management thought which placed a premium on efficiency, order and organisation. Similarly, despite the obvious 'rational' dangers involved in bringing in combustible materials into explosives factories like Gretna, female, as well as male, workers consistently ignored this regulation, despite the severity of the fines imposed. Carlisle newspapers refer to many court cases involving prosecutions of male and female workers. One female was fined £5 for having cigarettes and matches in a danger area, while others were fined £3, probably because they were caught in a 'safer' area. The idea of women smoking in public was still culturally unacceptable in many areas. The chairman of Longtown Petty Sessions expressed surprise at the number of girls appearing before him for such an offence. He found it 'disgusting and disgraceful'. Future cases brought before him would be severely dealt with. Yet the practice continued unabated. The

¹⁰¹ PRO, Mun 5/158/1122.7/2, Ministry of Munitions report on visit to Queensferry, December 8 1916.

¹⁰² PRO, LAB 5/1, D63, evidence of Mr. Melville Smith, Abbey Wood factory. L.K. Yates, *The Woman's part*, p. 25. Visual evidence of the wearing of the same sort of flowers by girls in the same section is also apparent from factory shots in the Ministry of Information film 'Women's Work', IWM, Dept. of Film, IWM 245, 1918.

exasperated chairman of Longtown Petty Sessions announced in May 1918 that fines had been tried for the past two years. Unless cases stopped prison would be considered in future.¹⁰³

Regulations prohibiting the wearing of metallic objects in the factory were also consistently ignored. Mary Allen noted that 'women were particularly troublesome over hairpins'. Metal buttons on blouses were forbidden, but this regulation was also flouted. One Gretna worker had her buttons snipped off her blouse by a policewoman.¹⁰⁴ Girls at Gretna also livened up the working day by having competitions to see who could be first out of the railway station. This involved jumping off the train before it was stationary and running across the railway line. Two workers were fined 5s at Dumfries Sheriff's Court for this practice. This was clearly not an isolated incident. The court heard that constant warnings about the dangers involved had no effect, so girls were now being prosecuted for such an offence.¹⁰⁵

Timekeeping and Absenteeism

The justification for the implementation of welfare provision in munitions factories was that it promoted efficiency and production. Timekeeping and absenteeism were a constant problem for all munitions factories, but particularly at explosives establishments where health risks were much greater.¹⁰⁶ Unsurprisingly, at Gretna those working in sections where acid fumes and greater risks of explosions were likely stayed a far shorter time than in other sections. The average length of service for girls who worked in the nitrating section was 4.75 months, whereas in other sections between 17 and 21 months was the norm. The reason for such a disparity was because girls allocated to the acids section often left or transferred after a few weeks.

¹⁰³ CJ, February 9, 1917, March 1, 1918, May 31, 1918.

¹⁰⁴ M. Allen, The Pioneer Policewoman, p. 65. G. Routledge, 'Boom Time at Gretna', The Scots Magazine, March 1995, p. 271

¹⁰⁵ D&GC&H, August 4, 1917.

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 1.

Out of 1,773 new starters in all cordite factories between July 19, 1915 and September 27, 1916, 771 had subsequently left.¹⁰⁷ At Gretna those who remained after a few months tended to stay there: 45 per cent of those working in the nitrating section had been there for over two years, probably because of the higher rates of pay in danger zones. This is reflected in the government statistics which showed that the average length of service of Gretna females who had left the factory was between four and six months, whereas the figure for those still on the payroll in 1918 was between 14 and 18 months. The average length of service for all women on the payroll was just over 16 months, a similar figure to that of male workers.¹⁰⁸ Thus there was a substantial core of workers who remained at the factory for most of the war. However, absenteeism was still a major problem. The factory was initially overstaffed at 5 per cent to allow for sickness and absenteeism, but this was increased to 10 per cent from the beginning of 1917. A similar allowance was in operation at other cordite factories. Statistical evidence shows that women took more time off than men. In the acids sections between December 1917 and July 1918 5.5 per cent of the female staff were absent, compared to 3.5 per cent of men. In the cordite section the figures were 4.2 per cent female and 2.2 per cent male.¹⁰⁹ Such figures led factory manager David Gilmour to tell the Committee on Women in Industry that women were less dependable than men. Gilmour thought that absenteeism among young, single workers was at a similar rate to married women, but the reasons were different. He attributed married women's absenteeism to domestic duties or family needs, whereas single workers, living in hostels or lodgings, were staying away because their earnings were 'greater than the needs of their home responsibilities. This diminishes their tendency to work.' Young female workers were 'more apt to stay away when the

¹⁰⁷ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/25, Medical Research Committee Report on Causes of Wastage in Munitions Factories Employing Women, 1918, p. 33.

¹⁰⁸ PRO, LAB 5/1, L24, average length of service of Gretna workers. Mun 2/22, Department of Explosives reports.

¹⁰⁹ LAB 5/1, L18, evidence of D. Gilmour, Gretna manager, November 16, 1918. S42, evidence of Mr. Maginness, Kynochtown factory, Scotland. L24, statistics of absenteeism at Gretna, December 1917 - July 1918.

work is uncongenial'. Taking time off for sickness was also more common. Additionally, females needed longer periods of rest than men. Explanations for absenteeism, given by factory officials were not always consistent. Some thought females were bad timekeepers because of lack of factory experience, while others thought that those with factory experience were the worst offenders because they tended to stay away on Mondays if they had earned a lot the previous week.¹¹⁰ A Ministry of Munitions report into factory wastage concluded that females over 23 were more likely to leave than younger workers. The solution proposed was to recruit older women for lighter work, while giving younger females the more strenuous jobs. Yet at Gretna, absenteeism or leaving work altogether was highest in sections where girls performed physical tasks or worked in hazardous conditions. Equally, although welfare work was assumed to be an answer to bad timekeeping, it clearly wasn't remedying the situation at Gretna. The problem of wastage was 'considerable,' but equally as worrying to ministry officials, despite extensive investigations into the problem, was that it was 'unexplained.' Analysis of 40,000 workers' records in 18 factories failed to find a definitive answer because of 11,005 females who had left, 6,697 had failed to give an official reason for their departure.¹¹¹ The Health of Munitions Workers Committee eventually published 21 memoranda on workers' health and efficiency from September 1915 to the end of 1917. In 1919 the Women's Employment Committee concluded that workers protected themselves from the rigours of munitions work by absenteeism or sick leave. Looking back on the HMWC's work in 1940, Dr. H.M. Vernon concluded that the obsession with maximum production and the excessive hours worked in munitions factories was 'the cardinal error of World War I'. Working shorter hours aided production rather than hindered it.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ LAB 5/1, L17-18, evidence of David Gilmour. L6, evidence of H.W.T. Mason, Department of Explosives. D56, evidence of Mr. Melville-Smith, Abbey Wood filling factory manager.

¹¹¹ PRO, Mun5/92/346/25, Medical Research Committee Report on Causes of Wastage of Labour in Munitions Factories Employing women, 1918.

¹¹² PRO, Mun 4/6361, Report of Women's Employment Cttee, Cd 9239, July 2, 1919, p28.

Munition tribunal cases brought because of absenteeism were given prominence in local newspapers in the Gretna area. Judging by comments made by tribunal chairmen, the object was to deter the constant problem of absenteeism rather than impose heavy sentences. Many cases simply resulted in an admonition: a further tool of factory discipline, as Jerry Rubin suggests. Tribunals were modelled on pre-war National Insurance panels and comprised employers' and workers' assessors plus a legally qualified chairman. General tribunals dealt with bigger cases involving strike prosecutions or prosecutions of employers accused of having poached workers from rival firms. Local tribunals dealt with leaving certificate applications and prosecution of workers alleged to have infringed Ordering of Work rules.¹¹³ Local tribunals sat far more frequently than the general tribunals. Between July and December 1916 3,732 cases were heard, as opposed to 182 general cases. By June 1916 an average of 772 cases were heard weekly. The Munitions Act of January 1916 stipulated that in cases involving women one assessor should be female. Attending tribunals were costly for workers because they lost at least half a day's pay. Night workers lost sleep. Criticism was made of the tribunals for intimidating inexperienced girls and causing them hardship by imposing fines.¹¹⁴ Some girls, however, were not always ready to show contrition or deference. At Annan Munitions tribunal four teenage girls sniggered while evidence was read out that they had persistently "skived off" work to go to dances and cinemas. The chairman, in fining them £1 each, rebuked them and told them if they thought they had come to Gretna to enjoy themselves they were very much mistaken: 'they were there to facilitate the work of the nation'. He complained that too many Gretna employees persisted in taking time off. An Annan girl was fined £1 for similar offences at a tribunal in June 1916. She had not turned up for work on six occasions in May and twice in the first week of June. In another case two 18-year-

¹¹³ J. Rubin, *War, Law and Labour* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 1-2. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 96-101.

¹¹⁴ I. Osgood Andrews and M.A. Hobbs, *Economic Effects of the World War Upon Women and Children in Great Britain* (Oxford, 1921), p. 97. PRO, Mun 5/98/3, Return of Cases Heard Before Munitions Tribunals. B. Stanley, 'Women in Unrest 1914-1918', *Labour Monthly*, No. 22, August, 1940. See also cases cited in Woollacott, *On Her their Lives Depend*, pp. 96-104.

olds were admonished for similar offences. The assessor remarked that the case had been brought with reluctance, but factory officials 'were very much troubled by girls going off like that'.¹¹⁵ Some women assessors were affronted by cases where workers had legitimate reasons for being absent, but were still prosecuted, but had no sympathy for girls 'with none or half an excuse'.¹¹⁶ One girl who returned to St Andrews in Scotland when the factory closed down for a week's holiday in July 1917 did not come back for a month. She had been absent from work before. Other cases involving Gretna female workers illustrate that working long hours left little time for an outside life. Three girls were prosecuted for turning up late for a Saturday afternoon shift. All three had been working 60 hours a week, including night work.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Welfare work at Gretna cannot be viewed as having a single purpose. It was implemented to protect workers, but also to regulate them. Additionally, there was an educative or socialising aspect performed by middle-class women in advising, guiding and warning female workers. This moral authority, drawing heavily on the legacy of nineteenth century female social reformers, was still a prominent feature of welfare, although supervisors also challenged masculine claims to authority through the adoption of professionalism.¹¹⁸ The relationship between welfare supervisors and female workers was not an equal partnership. Class and age differences were clearly important in questions of authority. Thus the hierarchies of factory life were not broken down.

Welfare supervisors' authority was also defined by their adherence to rational scientific management techniques, imported from American business, albeit with an

¹¹⁵ *CJ*, April 17, 1917, *D&GS*, June 16, 1916, *CJ*, May 8 1917.

¹¹⁶ *Woman Worker*, October 1916, 'Some Impressions of a Woman Assessor', p. 5.

¹¹⁷ *CJ*, June 5, July 17, September 19, 1917.

¹¹⁸ For an analysis of gender and the construction of authority by welfare supervisors, women police and YWCA workers, see A. Wollacott, 'From Moral to Professional Authority: Secularism, Social Work and Middle Class Women's Self-Construction in World War I Britain', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1998, pp. 83-111.

attempt to humanise such a philosophy . The rationality of welfare supervisors was contrasted with the irrational and often frivolous behaviour of young girls, which seemed particularly worrying when set against the sombre tone of wartime. Young female workers adopted strategies, at least in part, to counter the rigours of work and the attentions of factory officials. Taking time off work and challenging or ignoring the authority of those above them was an effective tactic for a young workforce which, while predominantly non-unionised, was not an entirely subservient one.

Chapter 3

Munitions Workers and Housing

A Model Township?

When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle visited Gretna and Eastriggs in 1916 he declared it 'one of the wonder spots of the earth, as showing what man's brain and energy can effect'.¹

It is not surprising that Conan Doyle was impressed. Work had begun on the nine-mile factory complex in August 1915 and nine months later production was underway. Thousands of construction workers had entered the area, bringing with them problems of housing such numbers and catering for their recreational needs. Once the factory was built, however, the logistical problems did not subside. In the wake of the departing construction workers came a new influx of munitions workers, many of them female. Around 15,000 workers had to be accommodated in a district originally estimated to be capable of housing only 4,500 within a radius of 25 miles.² How the Ministry of Munitions tackled this housing problem is the subject of this chapter. It focuses mainly on the housing of the young, female section of the workforce which came from outside the area. In addition it *attempts to assess whether* living away from home in hostels or lodgings offered new opportunities for developing social relationships and for transforming pre-war gender and class identities.

Housing munitions workers was of huge concern. Young girls were being imported into unfamiliar areas and away from family networks: what was supposed to replace that system of care? Work to aid the war effort was the primary reason for their being there, but recreating a substitute home life was also of importance. These

¹ A. Conan Doyle, 'Eastriggs and Gretna: The Miracle Towns', in *AQ*, December 1, 1916.

² Official History of Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI (1922), p. 68

two factors were inextricably linked. Welfare was considered as a means for efficient production and also for educating working-class girls. If the State could justify the mobilisation of such a vulnerable section of society then it also had the responsibility to look after them. Dorothea Proud, in her handbook on welfare work in 1916, wrote: 'By the agency of the State, men, women and boys and girls are being exported from their homes and imported into munitions areas. On the State, therefore, the responsibility lies, not only for caring for workers inside the factory, but also for providing outside the factory the safeguards essential for their health and morals, the maintenance of which is essential to the nation.'³ This was the overriding rationale: young female munitions workers were not only individuals in their own right, but were also regarded as a national asset as future mothers and wives. Additionally, in wartime the state could demand the surrender of individual desires and needs for the sake of the common good. This was a lesson the Ministry of Munitions was anxious for girls to learn. The housing strategy adopted reflects such an attitude.

The Government demonstrated its seriousness in housing Gretna employees when the Ministry of Munitions' Department of Explosives Supply set up its own housing branch under Garden City pioneer Raymond Unwin in 1915. Unwin was seconded from his job as Chief Town Planning Inspector at the Local Government Board and brought with him a team of architects who had worked on the Hampstead Garden Suburb in 1906.⁴ Gretna had been chosen as a suitable site for construction of an explosives factory partly because of its remoteness from any large centres of population, unlike the country's largest existing munitions factory at Woolwich, in London. It also had the advantage of the nearby presence of urban centres of Carlisle and Dumfries and the smaller town of Annan which could absorb some of the population influx.⁵ However, it would be impossible to accommodate all 15,000

³ D. Proud, Welfare Work, (1916), p. 119.

⁴ M. Swenarton, Homes Fit for Heroes: The Politics and Architecture of Early State Housing in Britain (1981), p. 52.

⁵ PRO, HO 185/213, confidential memo on Gretna, September 11, 1915.

workers without erecting new housing. Building two new townships at Gretna and Eastriggs on garden city lines could additionally provide homes with lower densities per acre and with bigger gardens than in urban areas. Enthusiasm for such model housing had increased before the War when 50 such schemes had been started in Britain with around 11,000 houses being built. There were disadvantages to such ideas, however. Higher building costs meant higher rents, enabling only more affluent workers to afford them. Furthermore, such schemes often meant increased transport costs to work. Even the original model villages of industrialists such as the Levers at Port Sunlight and the Cadburys at Bournville, although closer to the workplace, were not always viewed enthusiastically by their inhabitants. Lever noted in 1909 that many workers, far from adapting to a semi-rural existence, found the distance from urban leisure facilities too much of a burden. Exchanging the delights of gardening for pub-going was not always well-received.⁶ The wartime townships of Gretna and Eastriggs attempted to compromise in this direction by offering communal leisure facilities - albeit without provision of alcohol- to offset problems connected to the remoteness of the location.⁷ Offering such provision in the first place would attract married workers to the factory, and also help solve the pressing problem of labour turnover once they were there, as Ministry officials freely admitted.

Gretna and Eastriggs, therefore, were model townships, but intended for skilled, married workers and their families. While it was recognised that an efficient munitions industry was essential to winning the war, Treasury nervousness about the costs involved was a persistent concern. In June 1915 the Treasury agreed to allow housing schemes where necessary for war production, but these were to be temporary buildings except where this was impossible. Garden city-type houses were deemed to be impractical because of the expense involved.⁸ Between 1915 and 1918 the

⁶ Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*, pp. 8, 12 & 34.

⁷ See Chapters 4, 5 and 6 on the subject of leisure provision.

⁸ PRO,T132, Treasury memo to Ministry of Munitions, June 15, 1915.

Ministry of Munitions was allocated £4.3m, which was mostly spent on temporary buildings. By May 1917 there were 494 hostels in 206 different locations in Britain, housing 24,000 females and 22,800 men. In January 1918 524 hostels had been built.⁹ The Treasury's reluctance to fund permanent schemes was eventually overruled by the priority given to munitions-making. By the end of the war around 10,000 permanent homes had been erected in connection with munitions factories on 38 different estates. Various methods were tried to fund the programme. Attempts to work through local authorities, by offering to meet part of the cost, were largely unsuccessful due to disagreements over finances. Only four schemes were agreed in 1915. For example, in 1915 the Ministry of Munitions offered a *grant of 20 per cent to Sheffield Council* to build 800 houses for munitions workers. The council refused to proceed with the scheme unless the grant was increased, which the Ministry refused to do. Instead, a programme of temporary hostels for 2,000 workers went ahead. When this proved insufficient, the council adopted part of the original scheme, building 261 houses with a 20 per cent grant-aid. Newcastle Council's plan to build 688 tenements was replaced by a scheme to build 600 temporary cottages after failing to agree a completion date with the Ministry. A later plan to build 336 houses with a 20 per cent grant was scrapped due to cost and completion date difficulties.¹⁰

Government aid was also given to munitions manufacturers and 20 schemes ensued, including the estates built at Crayford and Barrow by Vickers in 1915 with a War Office grant. Thirteen schemes were built by government departments, the major ones being at Gretna and Woolwich. The others were smaller exercises built towards the end of the war.¹¹ Other munitions areas improvised according to local circumstances. The explosives factory at Pembrey in Wales used local labour, but when that source was exhausted special trains were put on to bring in workers from

⁹ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/131, 'Existing Hostels and their Distribution,' 1st report May 1917 and 2nd report, January 1918.

¹⁰ PRO, Mun 5/96/346.2/16, Provision of Housing in Sheffield, December 24, 1915. Mun 5/96/346.2/12, Housing Provision at Newcastle.

¹¹ Swenarton,, Homes Fit for Heroes, pp. 51-2.

the neighbouring urban centres of Swansea and Camarthen instead of erecting temporary housing schemes.¹²

The battle between Treasury officials and the Ministry of Munitions is perfectly illustrated in the example of Gretna. Originally all the buildings were to be temporary structures; four-roomed cottages for married workers, and hostels and barracks, each accommodating between nine and 70 single workers. However, following a visit from Christopher Addison, under-secretary to Lloyd George at the Ministry of Munitions, in May 1916, the decision was taken to erect 'a considerable number' of permanent cottages at Eastriggs, along with 'a small amount' at Gretna. Addison was clearly aware that adequate housing was a pre-requisite for attracting sufficient workers to munitions areas. After discussing housing problems in urban areas in September 1915 he noted in his diary: 'You cannot expect decent workers earning good wages to crowd into the already overcrowded houses in these places'.¹³ Financial factors were still predominant, however. Martin Swenarton notes that the switch from totally temporary buildings to a proportion of permanent dwellings coincided with a rise in the price of timber, which suddenly made construction in concrete a viable proposition. Overall, 310 permanent cottages were built at Gretna and Eastriggs.¹⁴ Addison was aware that temporary huts and barracks might be deemed sufficient for migrant construction workers, but not for skilled male munitions workers and their families brought into the area. Forty houses were purpose-built for factory foremen while another 150 were built to house factory officials.¹⁵

The eventual layout of the houses was a compromise between Unwin's earlier garden city designs and the need for a cost-efficient scheme. Although built on a low density layout in short blocks of five or six houses in closes or cul-de-sacs, the houses

¹² PRO, Mun 5/354/1122/2-22, Pembrey Filling Factory.

¹³ C. Addison, *Four and a Half Years*, Vol I (1934), pp. 131, 210 & 214.

¹⁴ Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*, p. 58

¹⁵ PRO, Mun 5/158/1122.7/1, Visit to Gretna, January 28, 1916 by G.H. Duckworth.

had a more simplified, symmetrical and standardised appearance than earlier schemes, perhaps appearing more appropriate for wartime austerity. Gone were the broken rooflines, complex shapes and use of a variety of materials like those by architect Frank Baines in the scheme at Woolwich. The ornateness at Gretna was reduced to the use of portals and lintels. Both parlour and non-parlour designs were used, reflecting the then unresolved debate between those like Unwin, who preferred large, airy rooms and those who acknowledged that the parlour was often considered a prerequisite by working-class families, despite its irregular use. The housing was also socially graded. Some non-parlour types had double fronts with a separate bathroom. One parlour design had a parlour and living-room at the front with a side entrance and an upstairs bathroom. The other type had a bath in the scullery. An intermediate type had a living-room, small scullery and separate kitchen. This simplified and standardised design did not please garden city-design purists. Mrs Alwyn Lloyd, wife of the garden city architect T. Alwyn Lloyd, visited Gretna and Eastriggs and found it 'depressing'. However, such designs, particularly when applied to the need for low-cost housing, were a strong influence on post-war housing schemes.¹⁶ These permanent dwellings, however, were never intended to house the young, single, female operatives. The arrangement for around 6,000 females imported into the area was entirely different.

Female Housing Provision

Migrant female workers were housed in hostels *in the townships of Gretna and Eastriggs*, and also over the border in Carlisle. The problem of accommodating such large numbers is apparent in that the Ministry also had to lodge females in private housing in Carlisle and the Scottish towns of Dumfries, Annan and Langholm, a few miles from the factory. Hostel accommodation was standard practice at munitions factories throughout Britain where existing housing supply could not cope with the

¹⁶ Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*, pp. 59-61. See also S.M. Gaskell, *Model Housing* (1987).

influx of munitions workers. By mid-1917 throughout the country there were 276 hostels for females, 216 for men and two for boys. These accommodated around 24,000 women and 22,800 men. Of these, only around half were supplied by the Ministry of Munitions, the remaining hostels being provided by philanthropic or religious organisations such as the YWCA or by factory employers, thus emphasising a continuation of the vital role still played by voluntary organisations during the War. Standards varied accordingly.¹⁷ The Ministry of Munitions Outside Welfare section had a hostel inspectorate, comprising two male and two female travelling officers with a legal right to inspect hostels, plus a team of secretaries and typists. However, those run by the Ministry's Housing department were exempt from inspection, being deemed to be of a superior type: the hostel provision at Gretna was seen as setting the standard. Those not directly run by the Ministry were visited and a card index was kept on each hostel. Diet lists were kept so that food values could be recorded for each establishment. An official in the Ministry's Medical Statistical Branch worked out food values for each hostel. If they fell below the recommended level of 3,500 calories per day for men and 2,800 for women on medium work, a doctor wrote to the hostel management recommending various remedies, for example, increasing the bread or cereal ration.¹⁸ Such state intrusion into privately run hostels was sometimes resented. Hostel inspectors noted that Binnie House in Glasgow, which housed 111 girls, was run by a matron who 'was not willing in the past to give facilities for inspection'. Presumably, inspectors had to use their legal authority to gain entrance. Other hostels of pre-war origin were clearly of a low standard. An unnamed charitable institution in Glasgow was deemed to be distinctly below official requirements. Inspectors wrote that 'the character of the hostel makes it very difficult to suggest suitable alterations to bring it up to a standard of a munitions hostel'. Whatever

¹⁷ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/118, Outside Welfare Section, Report on Hostels, August 1917.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp 1-3 and Memo LR373. Mun 5/92/346/40, Reports on Hostels, 1918. Mun 5/93/346/131, Reports on Hostels, May 1917.

individual arrangements were, however, detailed records had to be kept by hostel inspectors. Weekly forms were filled in showing the number of people living there, the numbers leaving or admitted, along with details of any sick workers, either attended by a doctor or sent to hospital. Explanations were also demanded as to reasons for decreases in numbers, rates of sickness, and vacancies. A financial breakdown also had to be supplied, citing rents, board, laundry costs, arrears and bad debts.¹⁹

There was therefore a substantial variety in hostel accommodation for female munitions workers. It was also a new experience for most of them. Before the war there were 16 hostels for female workers and six for men in England. In Scotland there were 11 for females and three for males, all privately run. Ministry of Munitions hostels were planned to offer a different experience to the existing establishments. Pre-war hostels were perceived to be run on more institutional lines, exerting moral influence to enable poorly paid females not to succumb to temptation.²⁰ For example, hostel accommodation for low-paid or unemployed jute workers in Dundee, erected in the middle of the nineteenth century, were places where 'fallen women' were taught to use a broom.²¹ Wartime hostel accommodation was justified by the Ministry's welfare section as a new approach for the modern female where 'young girls' could be 'housed comfortably and at a reasonable rate'. The intention was to create a hostel for the 'independent type of working girl'. The hostel accommodation at Gretna was supposed to be a classic example of such accommodation.²²

¹⁹ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/40 and Mun 5/93/346/118.

²⁰ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/118, pp. 4-5.

²¹ Cited in E. Gaudie, Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing 1780-1918 (1974), pp. 243-4.

²² PRO, Mun 5/93/346/118, pp. 4-5.

Gretna Hostels

Accommodation for female workers at Gretna and Eastriggs was divided into three main types: two-storey brick buildings, one-storey wooden hostels and smaller 'bungalow-type' huts. At Gretna there were two two-storey buildings, housing 120 each and five housing around 90 each. Apart from sleeping quarters these also featured recreation and rest rooms, dining and sitting rooms, kitchens, sculleries and toilet and washing facilities. In each building was a matron, assistant matron and cooks and maids. There were 26 one-storey wooden hostels each housing around 65 workers and 10 hostels housing 86 operatives each. These, too, had a similar staff arrangement to the larger barrack-type buildings. The bungalow accommodation comprised six huts housing 24 each and 50 housing nine each. Both types had a cook-housekeeper in charge with the larger huts also each employing two maids. At Eastriggs there were 13 two-storey barracks, each housing between 74 and 98 workers and two one-storey wooden hostels, housing 86 operatives each. Both sorts also employed a matron and assistant matron, a cook and five maids. In Carlisle the four-storey Great Central Hotel was requisitioned by the Ministry and housed 350 workers. Its staff comprised a head matron, four assistant matrons, one messroom supervisor, two cooks, 20 kitchen and messroom maids, nine housemaids, four cleaners, one clerk and four male employees. It is unclear whether this was largely the existing hotel staff or whether new staff was recruited. The Ministry also took over the city's Skating Rink and Riding School and converted it into the Edenbridge Hostel, housing 408 workers. Its staff comprised a similar number to the Great Central Hotel. The rink was heated with hot water pipes and partitioned off into cubicles. Two neighbouring blocks, one a warehouse and the other a garage, were also converted into sleeping quarters. A covered way led to the Riding School which was converted into a messroom, kitchen and recreation hall.²³ These two city-based hostels remained open until February 1918 when they were closed as the townships of Gretna and Eastriggs

²³ JWM, Women's Work Collection, Mun 14/11, HM Factory Gretna: The Welfare Department, pp. 7-9. DL, Plans and Sale of HM Factory Gretna, 1924.

were able to accommodate a greater number of operatives. Housing munitions workers in such comparative splendour as the Great Central Hotel must have caused considerable comment in Carlisle, particularly when such females, who were not even natives of the city, appeared to be waited on by hotel staff, and when this seemingly luxurious lifestyle was being supplied courtesy of the State. The Carlisle Journal, on recording their closure, noted 'the expense of maintaining these large establishments with eight or ten matrons and large domestic staffs is no longer justified'.²⁴ Gretna workers living in large barracks in the townships, even though they also had a similar quota of domestic staff, did not cause such public comment. Thus hostel life for Gretna workers was not a standard experience. Some girls lived in small groups of nine while others were living in close proximity to much larger numbers of fellow workers. Some lived close to the factory, while others lived over eight miles away, needing to catch a train at Carlisle station before reaching their work.

Such a varied experience raises the question of how the Ministry decided who should live where and whether hostels reflected a degree of social stratification apparent in contemporary housing culture in society. Given officials' great faith in efficient planning and organising both inside and outside the workplace, it is not surprising that the issue of hostel allocation was taken seriously. Each hostel or bungalow was allocated to one of the three shifts, so that operatives not only worked together but lived together. Meals were also communal. Those on morning shifts were provided with a cup of tea and biscuits at 6am, while breakfast and dinner were taken at the factory canteen. On return they ate a tea with meat at 4.45pm and at 9.15pm. cocoa, soup and bread was provided. Those on afternoon shifts had a 9am breakfast and 1pm dinner in the hostel with a light tea and supper served at the factory. Night shift workers were provided with tea and biscuits on arrival at the factory at 10pm, a main meal at 2am and tea and biscuits at 7.30am before leaving. A hostel breakfast was provided at 8.30am and a dinner at 5.30pm when the night shift woke. Meal

²⁴ CJ, February 19, 1918.

tickets were offered to allow workers to eat in the canteen. The tickets were stamped for the day of issue and scrutinised by the women police.²⁵

Detailed planning by the Ministry encompassed all aspects of hostel life. When girls arrived in a hostel, left the factory, transferred to other quarters, were sick or absent from work without explanation, such details were recorded in triplicate by the matron and sent to the Lady Welfare Superintendent. This information was then passed onto the Wages Office and Shift Supervisors. Records were also kept of the number of beds occupied or available and the Welfare Department in return notified matrons of those granted leave, those dismissed and those whose clock numbers had changed. Such intricate records of workers' lives was justified by welfare officials because of the large numbers of hostel dwellers involved and the need to keep accurate wage records. Such details, however, were the 'skeleton framework of the community'. Welfare officers were at pains to depict hostel life as idyllic: 'a happy, comfortable home, good food and plenty of it, clean comfortable beds in their prettily decorated cubicles (with) large fires in the bright, gay messrooms and recreation rooms'. Hostel life catered for their material and emotional needs, typified by the matron 'who in truth looked on herself as Mother to her girls, and to whom they brought all their joys and sorrows' ²⁶

Some outside observers were also suitably impressed. Members of Sunderland Suffrage Society paid a visit to an unnamed 'large munitions camp' where 'homes had been erected for 10,000 girls', suggesting that the factory was Gretna. Society members found that 'most of the workers look the picture of health and happiness'. Some of these workers were Sunderland girls who 'spoke of their relief from food worries compared to those at home' ²⁷ L.K. Yates visited Gretna and praised the hostels for their happy atmosphere where 'a minimum number of rules are enforced'.

²⁵ IWM, Mun 14/11, HM Factory Gretna: The Welfare Department, pp. 9-10.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁷ Sunderland Echo, January 11, 1918.

Yates noted that although such females were wearing 'masculine costumes', 'the spirit of home-life, of joy, has not been discouraged: rather has it been fostered, or rekindled, in these unaccustomed homes provided by the State. Indeed, most of the girls passing through this strange war-time adventure have assuredly gained by their pilgrimage precisely in these qualities most needed by the wives and mothers of the rising generation'.²⁸

Welfare provision to produce such seemingly contented workers, however, did not come cheaply. By September 1918 the Ministry had spent £1,286,280 on the two townships. Throughout the country just over £5m was invested in housing projects by March 1918.²⁹ By November 1918 Ministry officials were stressing the need to terminate expenditure on munitions workers' accommodation. The process had already begun, however, as the demand for such workers slowed down in the final year of the War. During that current financial year only £695 had been spent on six hostel plans when a sum of £10,000 had been allotted.³⁰

A Lady's Life?

How did munitions workers themselves view life in hostels? Peter Liddle's interviews with workers from the North-East in the 1970s suggest that individuals reacted to the experience in different ways. The narrative of a contented workforce living in pleasant housing conditions offered by Gretna welfare officials is also related by some of the workers. Mrs. Emily Hubble and her future sister-in-law Mrs. Evelyn Davies, then aged 20, came from Sunderland to work at Gretna in 1916. Both were from respectable working-class families, with the latter's father a Sunderland shipyard worker. Evelyn Davies, for example, had not worked before the War. Emily Hubble had favourable memories of hostel life. 'We didn't get much (in wages) but we got our food and board in the hostel. So . . . I should imagine we weren't doing so

²⁸ L.K. Yates, *The Woman's Part*, (1918), pp. 62-4.

²⁹ PRO, Mun 4/5334, HM Factory Gretna, Summary of Expenses to September 1918. Mun 4/4521, Letter October 7 1918 re. Ministry of Munitions housing expenditure.

³⁰ PRO, Mun 4/4558, November 29, 1918, Financial Position Re. Extramural Hostels.

bad. We never wanted for anything We were very happy, we had no responsibilities. We were being fed and looked after and everything. It was a kind of a lady's life in a way.' Both friends were billeted together in the Edith Cavell Hostel. Evelyn Davies remembered that, although there were a number of hostel regulations, 'they were not too strict'. Mrs. E.N. Smith, also from Sunderland, remembered the hostel as 'a marvellous wooden construction with four dormitories and a large dining room. We were very comfortable and got pretty good food except when it got a bit scarce.'³¹

These three workers therefore found in such surroundings, despite a degree of regulation, a sense of security, an important factor for young girls living away from home and in strange surroundings. Emily Hubble's narrative also suggests that for some working-class girls such a life also represented a freedom from normal responsibilities in the family home. Instead of having to contribute to work within the family household, perhaps cooking, cleaning or looking after younger siblings, munitions workers were being fed and looked after themselves. With hostel maids to do domestic duties in hostels and cooks to prepare food, life away from the factory had a certain degree of freedom.. In that sense Emily Hubble's remark about 'leading a lady's life' is particularly pertinent. Instead of housework or other familial duties there was more time to spend on recreation. Significantly Hubble and Davies spent a lot of free time in the works library 'because we were both great readers'. Passing the time in cafes 'for a cup of tea and a rock bun' was another frequent leisure choice, while in the summer 'there was a nice garden where you could just lie outside in the warm weather'. Neither of the pair went to factory dances and did not go out looking for social relationships with men. Emily Hubble's boyfriend and future husband was serving in the Army, so the two friends seem to have just socialised together. Evelyn Davies remembered: 'We didn't bother much with them (boyfriends), Emily had one

³¹ Liddle Archive, University of Leeds Library, Item 4, Tapes 303 & 306, Mrs. Emily Hubble and Mrs Evelyn Davies. Tape 167 - Mrs. E.N. Smith.

anyway'. Such workers related to state provision positively and acted in a responsible way. While other girls soon left the hostels to find lodgings outside the factory, workers like Hubble, Davies and Smith chose to remain in the hostels.³²

While much of the space in hostels was for communal use, each inhabitant had a small amount of private space. Dormitories were divided up into cubicles 'where you had a little bed and cupboard and a window. You made it nice to suit yourself.'³³ Most cubicles had no doors, however. Instead, a curtain acted as an entrance. Ministry recommendations for cubicle areas did not allow for a great deal of space. A measurement of 6ft x 9ft by 8ft was deemed to be satisfactory.³⁴ Thus there appears to have been limited potential for displaying individuality amongst the standardisation of hostel life. However, hostel dwellers did attempt to personalise living areas. These could be brightened up by the use of photographs, which Queen Mary remarked upon during her visit to Gretna in May 1917.³⁵ L.K. Yates noted that cubicles were being customised with colourful curtains, decorated lockers and walls with prints. This was allowed by welfare officials, but the main intention was to enforce an atmosphere of tidiness to improve attitudes to slovenliness. 'A taste for purity is infectious, and it is unlikely that girls, having once come under the influence that induces them to leave their sleeping apartment immaculate before going to work before dawn, will ever again tolerate slum conditions.'³⁶ This suggests girls were reprimanded if their rooms were deemed to be untidy.

As well as promoting standards of tidiness, welfare officials were keen to get girls to show personal responsibility. Those from the same hostel block were encouraged to form tenants' committees to formulate rules which all had to observe. Such

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., Tape 303, Mrs Emily Hubble.

³⁴ Mun 5/92/346/20, Health of Munitions Workers Final Report on Industrial Health and Efficiency, 1918, p. 166.

³⁵ CJ, May 22, 1917.

³⁶ L.K. Yates, The Woman's Part, p. 60.

committees also organised hostel social functions. Thus the more responsible hostel inhabitants could police the activities of the less respectable. On nights when mixed dances were held girls committees could 'maintain a proper standard of behaviour'. This system produced 'esprit de corps' among workers. Rules were attempted to be kept to a minimum 'so that the girls feel trusted. . . .and in no instance (have they) taken advantage of the greater amount of freedom'.³⁷

How strict individual hostels were must often have depended on the matrons and the personal relationship developed with the inhabitants. Emily Hubble and Mrs. E.N. Smith both appear to have got on well with their respective matrons.³⁸ Such women were often of a different class from their charges as well as being a good deal older. 'Educated women' were the preferred choice for they were perceived as being able to set and enforce standards which would be of beneficial influence. They therefore had to be carefully chosen. Housing girls from different cultural backgrounds and with differing standards of cleanliness and behaviour created 'difficulties which were not easily overcome'.³⁹ Additionally matrons not only had to develop a close working relationship with middle-class welfare officials but also be able to cope with the mountain of administrative records that they were required to keep. Hostel life, therefore, had a number of advantages for young munitions workers, not least in providing a sense of security, but there is also evidence that the idyllic portrait painted by welfare officials did not tell the whole story.

³⁷ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/131, Report on Hostels, May 1917. Mun 5/92/346/40, Reports on Hostels, 1918.

³⁸ Liddle Archive, Item 4, Tape 303 and Item 23, Tape 167.

³⁹ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/131, Reports on Hostels, May 1917. Dorothea Proud, Welfare Work, p. 119. The issue of standards of cleanliness causing conflict is still evident in World War II as Penny Summerfield's examples show in Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives (Manchester, 1998), pp. 176-7.

Adapting to Hostel Life

Welfare officials at Gretna depicted the home life of hostel dwellers with a narrative of warmth in which 'large fires in the bright, gay messrooms and recreation rooms', suggested an atmosphere of contentment.⁴⁰ What is striking among the munitions workers from the North-East interviewed by Peter Liddle is that numerous references are made to the coldness of the dormitory areas. Hostel dwellers appear to have used communal facilities in order to keep warm, particularly during the harsh Borders winter. Nina Cooper, from Sunderland, remembered the dormitories as being 'very cold in cold weather. . . . As the maids washed the floor it turned to ice as they dried out' Mrs. P. Burton, from Washington, Co. Durham, remembered 1917 as 'the coldest winter I have ever experienced. In our hostel our bottles of milk were just blocks of ice and our towels had to be heated before we could use them. That was inside (the hostels) so it was obviously colder outside.' Even Emily Hubble, who adapted well to hostel life, could recall how cold the dormitories were. Winnie Miller, who travelled from Wick, in Caithness, to work at Gretna also had vivid memories of the severe cold.⁴¹ Hannah Atherton, from Spennymoor, remembered some of the more basic wooden huts where workers were originally lodged on arrival as being far from windproof or waterproof. Billeted with girls from Sunderland, many of them began to have serious doubts about the wisdom in coming to the plant.⁴²

The billeting of girls from the same area seems to have been a common practice, promoting an instant brand of camaraderie when faced initially with strange new surroundings. As Chapter 2 illustrated, contact with girls from other cultural backgrounds often tended to be less than amicable at first. However, initial suspicion of each other gradually broke down. In that respect munitions workers came into

⁴⁰ IWM, Mun 14/11, HM Factory Gretna, p. 10

⁴¹ Liddle Archive, Item 8, transcripts of interviews with Nina Cooper and Mrs. P. Burton. Item 4, Mrs. Emily Hubble. Mrs Winnie Nicol Miller, cited in G. Routledge, *Gretna's Secret War* (Carlisle, 1999), p. 55.

⁴² Cited in E. Ritchie, *The Gretna Girls*, Wigtown Museums publication, 1985.

contact with a far greater range of social contacts than probably they had experienced before with the resulting potential for creating new friendships.⁴³ At Gretna and other Ministry hostels the possibility of staying out late was limited. A 10pm curfew was imposed when the door was locked so that late returners were forced to knock up the matron and account for their actions. Women police also patrolled the hostels at night looking for unauthorised male visitors or female curfew breakers who could be detained by the policewomen.⁴⁴ Late passes were issued occasionally by the matron but these were strictly controlled. Probably matrons kept records of the number of passes issued.⁴⁵ One strategy adopted by some girls to escape this limitation of personal freedom was to simply stay out all night, sleeping in friends' rooms elsewhere. This may well have been a common occurrence for what appears to be a case to deter other workers was brought before Annan Munitions tribunal in February 1917. Two girls from Nelson House Hostel in Eastriggs were prosecuted for being absent from work. They had gone to a party in Eastriggs at a friend's house and remained there all night. The pair were simply let off with a warning. The Tribunal Board representative said it was 'a regular practice' with these girls. What seems to have concerned officials was that such actions were 'a bad example to the younger girls'.⁴⁶ Individual responses to the war-time adventure of becoming munitions workers obviously varied greatly. Emily Hubble managed to save money from her wages to enable her to travel back to Sunderland to see her boyfriend when he came home on leave from France. She was able to do this because she recalled: 'There wasn't really anywhere you could have spent it if you wanted to'.⁴⁷ This appears quite a surprising comment, given that the Ministry provided a host of leisure outlets, apart

⁴³ See Chapter 2.

⁴⁴ IWM, Emp 43/94, Women Police Service: Work Accomplished During 1916-17, p. 34. Mun 5/93/346/139, Memo on Women Police and Women Patrols, 1918.

⁴⁵ Liddle Archive, Item 4, Mrs. Emily Hubble, Item 8, Mrs. Nina Cooper.

⁴⁶ AQ, February 23, 1917.

⁴⁷ Liddle Archive, Item 4, Mrs. Emily Hubble.

from those on offer in nearby Carlisle. Behind this comment lies the suggestion that girls like Emily, who didn't frequent dances and spent a lot of her leisure time reading, wouldn't have considered 'wasting' money on cinema and pub-going. At the other extreme there were other young females at Gretna who found no difficulty in spending surplus cash on leisure facilities. Because this lifestyle was likely to lead to absenteeism from work and effect productivity, factory officials tended to take action if it got out of hand, as the case mentioned above suggests. The Eastriggs party-goers were not alone. In April 1916 four female workers living at a hostel in Gretna were prosecuted for - in suitably militaristic terms - absenting themselves without leave. During the last 13 weeks, out of a total of 702 working hours, one girl had lost 151 hours, one 58 hours, three 48 hours and two 21 hours. Instead of going to work they were 'enjoying themselves at dances and pictures in the evenings, and cafes in the afternoons.' It was 'sheer lack of interest in their work that was responsible for their conduct.' Each was fined £1.⁴⁸ In another case a female returned in a drunken state after a night out in Carlisle. Rebuked by the matron, she used threatening language. She was subsequently fined £3 at Dumfries Sheriff's Court.⁴⁹

Such young girls who flouted hostel rules were therefore perceived to have been a 'bad example' to fellow workers. At Gretna factory officials devised a system for isolating those deemed to be irresponsible or 'rough'. Once identified as being 'troublesome' they were taken out of their current hostel quarters and rehoused elsewhere in the townships. How one behaved and adapted to hostel regulations was clearly an important factor to welfare officials. As noted above, there were basically three types of hostel accommodation in the townships: large brick barrack-type buildings, housing between 80 and 120 workers, medium sized wooden hostels, accommodating between 60 and 80 inhabitants and the smaller one-storey bungalow huts for between nine and 25 girls.⁵⁰ What appears to have happened is that on

⁴⁸ D&GS, April 18, 1916.

⁴⁹ CJ, June 12, 1917.

⁵⁰ IWM, Mun 14/11, HM Factory Gretna: The Welfare Department, pp. 8-9

arrival girls were allocated a place in the medium-sized huts and assessed as to their ability to conform to hostel standards. Those that did not through anti-social or disruptive behaviour or who did not meet standards of cleanliness were rehoused in the larger brick hostels. Those who showed they could behave responsibly eventually had the chance to move to the smaller bungalows and live in smaller groups. Mrs. E.N. Smith recalled that : 'When we first moved there we were put into a hostel and after you were there so long they moved the rough ones out and put them in very large buildings. After that you could go to a bungalow with four girls and a matron, but I didn't bother because I liked it at the hostel.' L.K. Yates, while visiting Gretna, also noticed that older women were housed in bungalows, suggesting that the younger range of workers were considered too immature to live in smaller groups.⁵¹

Woollacott has noted that there were separate hostels for different classes of girls at Woolwich.⁵² At Gretna, too, there were some class distinctions. The hostels for members of the predominantly middle and upper-class Women Police Service were of a superior standard to ordinary workers' accommodation, with more elaborate bathing and cleaning facilities. There were also separate bedroom facilities with hot water pipes in every room. One policewoman compared it to college life.⁵³ While the vast majority of munitions workers living in township hostels were young, single and working-class, females from a higher status appear to have stayed elsewhere. The Girls Friendly Society (GFS) ran a hostel in Annan for 288 residents, possibly for Gretna office staff. A GFS hostel at Cardiff was full of clerks and typists. Ministry welfare officers noted that the organisation tended to let accommodation to 'superior types'.⁵⁴ Possibly the Ministry's take-over of the Great Central Hotel in Carlisle, which housed 350 female workers, was also intended for middle and upper-class

⁵¹ Liddle Archive, Item 23, Mrs. E.N. Smith. L.K. Yates, *The Woman's Part*, p. 62.

⁵² A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 53.

⁵³ PRO, Mun 5/369/1122.7/19, Gretna Factory. IWM, Emp 43/94, Women Police Service: Work Accomplished During 1916-17, p. 34.

⁵⁴ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/40, Report on Hostels, 1918.

females. But as the majority of township hostel dwellers were predominantly one-class, social stratification also went along lines of divisions between 'rough' and 'respectable', distinctions which were a part of working-class society anyway.⁵⁵ Mrs E.N. Smith also naturally used this categorisation when she talked of the 'rough girls' being moved elsewhere. Woolwich munitions workers interviewed by Deborah Thom in the 1970s also drew the same distinction between themselves and those who they saw as being coarser in word or action.⁵⁶ The need to dramatically increase munitions production from 1915 also meant that selection processes for such work was initially minimal. Dorothea Proud, in her handbook on welfare work, advised that 'only normally healthy and wholesome girls' should be brought into munitions areas. This was suggested because earlier attempts at importation had found that many girls had to be cleaned and disinfected, had physical disabilities or included 'women of bad character' who were associating with 'respectable girls' in hostels. This was 'dangerous' because of rumours spread about *munitions workers*, which made it more difficult to lodge them.⁵⁷ Thus while attempts were later made to recruit more physically and morally suitable candidates for munitions work, those that had earlier been recruited or who were found to be not conforming to social standards once they arrived, could be isolated in hostel accommodation and were thus less likely to 'infect' respectable girls. This is what appears to have been happening at Gretna.

Feeding the Workforce

Despite the numbers of hostels built to house munitions workers such buildings were never fully occupied. In May 1917 only around 50 per cent of hostel space was taken up. By January 1918 the figure had risen to two-thirds. Ministry officials were not completely sure why this was, but suggested it was due to the fact that their popularity

⁵⁵ See, for example, R. Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (1971). E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place* (1984).

⁵⁶ D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls* (1998), pp. 152-3.

⁵⁷ D. Proud, *Welfare Work*, p. 119.

had increased as food shortages worsened rather than the shortage of housing alternatives such as lodgings.⁵⁸ Probably both were significant factors. Hostel charges also took a substantial proportion of wages: Gretna board and lodging fees reduced women's gross labouring pay of £2 in August 1918 down to £1 2s 6d net.⁵⁹ Scarcity of food outside munitions areas was still a problem. What is noticeable is that some Gretna workers regularly sent food or money home to families, indicating that family ties were far from forgotten even when young females were living apart from mothers, fathers and siblings. Mrs P. Burton sent part of her wages home to her mother in Washington, Co. Durham. Her father was a colliery worker and her two brothers had enlisted in the Army. Annie Corrin worked at Gretna as a 19-year-old and sent back any surplus cash to her mother in the Isle of Man.⁶⁰ Sometimes family hardship took priority over a sense of community at Gretna. A 17-year-old girl stole a five shilling postal order from a workmate. The offender was detected when the postal order was cashed in Bishop Auckland by her brother. The girl had sent the postal order home to her parents. According to a Scottish minister, 'hundreds' of postal orders were sent home to families every week.⁶¹

Hostel workers at least had access to regular meals. Recommended hostel food for females included meat (3.5 - 8ozs a day), bread (3- 6.66lbs per week), margarine (4- 8.5 ozs a week). Men's recommended rations were greater: 6.5-12ozs of meat a day and 6-7lbs of bread a week. There was some regional variation: porridge was served as a meal in Scottish hostels, sometimes instead of a meat dish. Ministry officials justified this decision on the spurious grounds that Scots women were not used to eating large amounts of meat. Scottish and Yorkshire workers were also believed to prefer fish and chips to meat dishes. Gretna workers were fed better than those in other hostels elsewhere in the country. Unlike Gretna, poorer hostels had meatless

⁵⁸ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/131, 2nd Report on Hostels, January 1918

⁵⁹ PRO, Lab 5/1, Committee on Women in Industry, L21, Gretna Hostel Charges, 1918.

⁶⁰ Liddle Archive, Item 8, Mrs. Burton. E. Ritchie, The Gretna Girls.

⁶¹ AO, March 9, 1917. CN, July 28, 1917.

days.⁶² There was no rationing in hostels but Ministry officials stressed that food allowance was calculated for only what was deemed necessary to produce the output required of workers, probably indicating sensitivity to outside accusations of munitions workers being a 'privileged' group.⁶³ In practice some of the younger Gretna workers were probably not receiving adequate calories to perform the harder physical tasks such as pushing truckloads of cordite. Nina Cooper performed such work and found herself 'always hungry'. Coming from Sunderland, being served up unsweetened thick porridge as a main meal was not enthusiastically received. Opinions differed as to the quality of food, however. While Nina Cooper remembered the food as 'very poor', with dinners invariably cold by the time they were served up, Mrs. E.N. Smith thought the provision 'pretty good'.⁶⁴ What appeared important to welfare officials was that hostel inhabitants were likely to receive a healthier diet than what they had been accustomed to before the War with a balanced intake of protein, fat and carbohydrates. As today, young females were considered not able to choose for themselves 'a diet suitable or sufficient for their needs'. Additionally, welfare supervisors thought that the 'more refined' girl was less likely to adequately cater for herself than the 'rougher' girl would.⁶⁵

Girls in Lodgings

Gretna female workers appear to have had some choice between living in hostels or going into lodgings. Emily Hubble was given that choice and elected for hostel life.⁶⁶ It is unclear, however, whether every girl had the freedom to choose. As noted above, the Welfare Department used a 'clearing hostel' system for new arrivals until they

⁶² PRO, Mun 5/92/346/20, Health of Munitions Workers Committee Final Report, 1918, p. 168.

⁶³ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/118, Report on Hostels, August 1917

⁶⁴ Liddle Archive, Item 8, Nina Cooper. Item 23, Mrs. E.N. Smith.

⁶⁵ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/118, Report on Hostels, August 1917.

⁶⁶ Liddle Archive, Item 4, Mrs. Emily Hubble.

were allocated permanent accommodation. This was also in operation in 15 other areas in Britain, including Gloucester, Lancaster, Hereford, Middlesbrough and Coventry. The YWCA also ran voluntary clearing hostels in London, Birmingham, Llanelli, Swansea and Lincoln. Voluntary organisations such as the YWCA and the GFS had also performed this function before the war for young people arriving in large towns. Welfare supervisors screened girls during this time for their suitability for lodging out. Those deemed to be 'dirty' were billeted in the top bedrooms at the Lancaster Hostel and their bodies disinfected.⁶⁷ Workers who were not in hostels lived in accommodation in the neighbouring Scottish towns of Dumfries, Annan and Langholm and over the border in Carlisle. Annan, for example, with a population of 4,219 in 1915 housed around 500 female munitions workers by May 1917, 'the great bulk of them respectable girls', according to the Town Clerk.⁶⁸

There were many reasons why lodgings should be preferred to hostel accommodation. Living together and sharing facilities with large numbers of other workers was an alien experience for many, and lack of privacy was another important factor. Additionally, housing people from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds 'creates difficulties not easily overcome'. Dorothea Proud's handbook for welfare workers recommended lodgings as a better alternative to the provision of hostels.⁶⁹ Similar objections to hostels were made by the Health of Munitions Workers Committee. Its 1918 report noted that hostel life could be stifling with workers not always wanting to spend leisure hours with workmates. Hostels imposed an inevitable restriction on personal liberty. Lillian Barker, the Lady Superintendent at Woolwich, noted that the Arsenal's hostel accommodation was never completely filled because of lack of privacy and quiet.⁷⁰ The pre-war image of hostels as institutional

⁶⁷ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/131, 1st Report on Hostels, May 1917. Mun 5/92/346/40, Report on Hostels 1918. Mun 5/93/346/118, Report on Hostels August 1917.

⁶⁸ AQ, May 11, 1917, Report of Annan Town Council meeting.

⁶⁹ D. Proud, *Welfare Work*, pp. 120-2.

⁷⁰ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/20, Health of Munitions Workers Committee Final Report on Industrial Health and Efficiency 1918, p115. IWM, Mun 48/2, Evidence of Miss Lillian Barker, November 24, 1916, pp. 56-7.

establishments for the unemployed, rootless or women of bad character was still evidently strong, despite Ministry attempts to alter this association. This dislike of hostels was particularly evident in Scotland among female munitions workers, and particularly larger hostels. In Manchester and Salford, also, demand for hostel accommodation was minimal.⁷¹

Trade unions were also vocal in their opposition to hostels, especially because of their association with employers, making workers 'subject to 24-hour control by the firm'. Additionally, those who lost their jobs also lost their accommodation. Margaret Bondfield, giving evidence to the Women's Trade Union Advisory Committee in 1918, reacted angrily to the discharging of 400 women at Woolwich and subsequent loss of hostel accommodation, even though the hostels were only partially filled. Women workers were being denied a choice in surroundings and companions. Additionally there was great resentment at the assumption of welfare officials that female workers were not considered mature enough to make their own decisions. However, Ministry officials saw the use of hostels as purely a temporary wartime expedient and not as a permanent solution to the housing problem. The hostel accommodation at Gretna, for example, was designed to be converted into family cottages after the War.⁷²

The Housing Problem

The housing issue was a predominant social question before the First World War. In the 1911 Census 3,139,472 people lived in housing in England and Wales where there was more than two to a room - the level designated as overcrowding. In Scotland three to a room was the official indicator, bringing 1,005,991 people under that description. If the English measure of two to a room was used the figure doubled to 2,077, 277, or 45.1 per cent of the population. From the 1911 Census figures of

⁷¹ Mun 5/93/346/131, Reports on Hostels, May 1917 and January 1918. Mun 5/92/346/40, Report on Manchester area, November 1918.

⁷² PRO, Mun 5/52/300/78, Women's Trade Union Advisory Committee, evidence of Margaret Bondfield, January 17, 1918. Mun 5/93/346/131, 2nd Report on Hostels, January 1918, Trade Union leader's observations. 1st Report, May 1917.

1,010,531 inhabited houses in Scotland, 73.5 per cent were three rooms or under, and 539,084 of two rooms or under.⁷³ Cessation of building since the war had aggravated the problem. Scarcity of housing increased the potential for landlords to raise rents to unacceptable levels. As resentment grew against such practices, notably in the Clydeside Rent Strike, the Government intervened to impose rent control. The Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (War Restrictions) Act was passed in November 1915, keeping rents at pre-war levels.⁷⁴ Anger over the housing situation was reflected in industrial unrest and was therefore an obstacle to efficient munitions production. The Act, however, did not end the protests. In 1917 the Labour MP George Barnes blamed civil unrest on lack of housing, particularly in Scotland, Wales, the North-East and parts of the North-West. In Lanarkshire the housing shortage had produced 'serious unrest'. It was estimated that at least 300,000 houses would need to be built in England and Wales by the end of 1918, and that was admitted to be a very conservative figure. In 1945 Marion Bowley estimated the housing shortage by the end of the First World War as 600,000.⁷⁵

In munitions areas, housing shortages were exacerbated by the influx of workers. Where the shortage was seen as likely to seriously affect munitions production, the Government acted; hence the housing programmes initiated at Gretna, Woolwich, Clydebank, Barrow and other important industrial areas.⁷⁶ Such efforts helped to ameliorate the problem, but not solve it. Lilian Miles shared a bed with her sister in lodgings in Coventry, while six Irish girls shared the same bed in another room. Such

⁷³ Mun 5/96/346.2/21, Ministry of Reconstruction: Housing in England and Wales, Advisory Housing Panel, Cd 9087, 1918, p. 3. Mun 5/96/346.2/20, Royal Commission on Housing of Industrial Population of Scotland, Cd 8731, 1917.

⁷⁴ For differing interpretations of the reasons for state intervention in housing, see Swenarton, Homes Fit for Heroes. M. Daunton, Councillors and Tenants (Leicester, 1984). J. Melling (ed), Housing, Social Policy and the State (1980). D. Englander, Landlords and Tenant in Urban Britain (Oxford, 1983).

⁷⁵ Mun 5/96/346.2/22, Ministry of Reconstruction, Housing in England and Wales, 1918, p. 13. Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, G.N. Barnes, 1917. Report of Scotland area, Cd 8669, July, 1917, p. 4. Mun 5/96/346.2/21. M. Bowley, Housing and the State (1945), pp.11-12.

⁷⁶ For a full list of permanent munitions housing schemes, see S. Pepper and M. Swenarton, 'Home Front: Garden Suburbs for Munition Workers 1915-18', Architectural Review, 163 (1978), p. 375.

arrangements were not uncommon. In Richmond, London, it was noted that seven or eight workers often shared one room, with beds having no chance to be aired.⁷⁷

In Carlisle, the largest urban centre nearest to Gretna, shortage of accommodation was also a huge problem. Despite being able to house 6,000 female operatives in hostel accommodation in the area, lodgings for the remaining workforce were desperately needed. It may not, however, have been such an insurmountable problem as elsewhere. As the construction workers who had come into the area in their thousands to build the factory from mid-1915 left once production got underway, a certain amount of accommodation was released for the incoming female workforce. It is impossible to estimate accurately the number of females lodging outside the factory. In July 1917 11,576 females worked at Gretna.⁷⁸ Around 50 per cent, 6,000 of them, were in hostel accommodation. Thus the remaining 50 per cent must either have been native to the area or else incomers lodging in private accommodation. In 1917 there were 500 females lodging in Annan. A private hostel in Dumfries housed 278 girls.⁷⁹ The small town of Langholm also provided lodgings for an unspecified number. A figure of around 1,000 lodging in south-west Scotland would be a legitimate estimate. Probably around double that number were lodging in Carlisle. The city's population in September 1915, before the arrival of the female workforce, was 52,225. Two years later the figure had reached 56,347, an increase of 4,122.⁸⁰ It is not unreasonable to suggest that a proportion of this increase was attributable to female munitions workers lodging in the city. In 1921 the city's population had decreased by around 3,000, further suggesting that temporary workers accounted for part of the wartime rise.⁸¹ A housing survey conducted by the city council in

⁷⁷ IWM, DSR, 000854/04, 10, Lilian Annie Miles. Mun 5/92/346/36, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, memo on housing, February 1916.

⁷⁸ IWM, Mun 14/8, HM Factory Gretna: Table of Women Employed, July 1917, p. 10.

⁷⁹ AO, May 11, 1917. Mun 5/92/346/40, Reports on Hostels, 1918.

⁸⁰ PRO, HO 185/213, Central Control Board confidential memo on Gretna, September 11, 1915. C(arlisle) R(ecord) O(ffice), Ca E 9/32, Summary of Carlisle Housing Census, September 1917.

⁸¹ CJ, November 16, 1923.

September 1917 showed that 6,794 people were lodging in Carlisle at this time: 2,759 males and 4,035 females. Unfortunately, details of lodger's occupations is not shown, but a sizeable proportion of that number would surely have been munitions workers from outside the area.

Therefore the influx of temporary workers into the city would have exacerbated existing housing problems. Probably, however, as Jean Turnbull suggests, the wartime absence of enlisted males created the opportunity for extra living space to become available.⁸² The 1917 census was conducted by the city council to ascertain the level of overcrowding, to discover the number of new houses needed and to calculate how many older properties would have to be demolished. Such information would enable the council to put forward a scheme to the Local Government Board (LGB) for post-war reconstruction.⁸³ Council attempts to secure government loans for a housing programme had previously floundered due to the issue of financing. In November 1915 the council had applied to borrow £9,582 to buy land and erect housing under the 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act. The LGB accepted the need for such a plan but was unable to sanction housing loans except for war purposes. Meantime, the Ministry of Munitions did not consider that accommodation was required in the city for war purposes. Clearly, the Ministry's own building scheme at Gretna and Eastriggs was instrumental in this decision. In January 1916 plans for 36 houses to be built in the south-west working-class suburb of Denton Holme were proposed. The scheme eventually got underway in 1919. During that year 268 council houses were built in the city. The 1917 housing census revealed that the city had a shortage of 600 houses and that a further 1,500 houses would have to be demolished. The Liberal/Conservative-dominated council was clearly nervous about the financial implications of such a project. While recognising it had a duty to carry out a housing

⁸² J. Turnbull, 'Housing Tenure and Social Structure: The Impact of Inter-War Housing Change on Carlisle 1917-1939', Unpublished Phd Thesis, University of Lancaster, 1991, p. 83.

⁸³ CRO, P(roceedings) of C(arlisle) C(ouncil), November 1916-November 1917, Vol. XXVIII, Health Committee meeting, September 5, 1917, pp. 320-1.

programme there were 'fears about housing schemes which offered no indication of financial responsibilities to be borne by councils'.⁸⁴

The 1917 survey revealed the city's housing stock comprised 8,644 self-contained buildings, 1,685 back-to-backs and 1,566 tenements. In 1,042 houses a living-room was used as a bedroom. There were 1,794 dwellings where there were more than three to a bedroom and 801 houses where more than one family lived. Of the 6,794 lodgers in the city, there were 508 married lodgers who were in need of their own housing. Only 18 per cent of houses had fixed baths. Additionally, 2,051 had only one bedroom, 4,313 had two and 3,536 had three bedrooms. Most of the overcrowded areas were close to the city centre, while skilled manual working-class suburbs to the south of the city were less congested. Middle-class suburbs to the north and the east were even less overcrowded. Thus the city displayed all the characteristics of residential segregation along with pre-industrial patterns of city centre areas where rich and poor lived close together. Before 1914 only 40 houses were erected by the council. This changed dramatically in the inter-war years as the city's housing was dominated by council provision, mainly on green field sites. Between 1919 and 1939 the council built 4,803 homes out of a total of 7,002.⁸⁵

The 1917 survey also reveals that lodgers in the city were overwhelmingly housed in working-class areas, either in central locations or in the suburbs to the south. The suburb of Denton Holme, occupied by semi-skilled and skilled workers, in self-contained terraced housing, had 500 females and 206 males lodging in the area. Of the 1,312 houses 309 had more than three to a bedroom. In Westmorland Street, for example, in 29 of its 80 houses, 54 females and four males in predominantly two-up, two-down houses were lodged. Most of these houses lodged two females, although one woman with one living-room and two bedrooms had four female lodgers, suggesting that the use of beds on a shift basis was in operation. In nearby Norfolk

⁸⁴ CRO, PCC November 1915 - November 1916, Vol. XXVII, Health Committee meeting, November 19, 1915, pp. 25 & 98-9. Vol. XXVIII, November 1916- November 1917, p. 353. Vol. XXIX, p174, Vol. XXX, p. 54.

⁸⁵ CRO, Ca E 9/32, Summary of Carlisle Housing Survey. J. Turnbull, 'Housing Tenure and Social Structure', pp. 122 -4

Street 17 of its 39 houses had female lodgers. City-based Gretna workers were often liable to let out rooms. In Cumberland Street a Gretna male worker and his wife had four female lodgers in a two-up, two-down terraced house.⁸⁶ Olive Graham, who was a seven-year-old living in a two-up two-down house in Graham Street in 1917, remembered that a number of houses in her street lodged female munitions workers, including her own family. Thus in her house lived a family of six plus two female lodgers.⁸⁷ In Currock, populated by railway workers and largely comprising self-contained housing built after the 1880's, female lodgers are also heavily concentrated. The area which comprised 1,156 houses, had 414 female lodgers. Railway workers often let out rooms. In Adelphi Terrace, for example, a goods guard with a family of six in a three-bedroomed house with one living-room also had two female lodgers. In the same street a shunter and his family of three had one female lodger, as did an engine driver living nearby. In Mayson Street a munitions worker and his family of four lodged four females in a three-up, two-down terraced house. Female lodgers, if not living with families, stayed with widows or women whose husbands were in the Army. In poorer areas, dominated by one- and two-room back-to-backs and tenements, female lodgers were much less common. Such already overcrowded areas could hardly hold more inhabitants. An older section of Denton Holme, comprising 215 back-to-backs and tenements had only 42 female lodgers. In a similar area of Caldewgate only 61 females were lodging in 338 houses.⁸⁸

Middle-class suburbs also housed fewer lodgers. To the north of the city there were only 45 female lodgers in Stanwix ward No.1, with 394 houses. In the St Cuthbert ward, of 50 houses with three to seven bedrooms only a retired schoolmistress let out rooms to lodgers of both sexes. To the east of the city centre,

⁸⁶ CRO, Ca E 9/ 23 &32, Carlisle Housing Survey, summary and details of Denton Holme Ward.

⁸⁷ Interview with Mrs O. Graham, Carlisle, September 26, 1999.

⁸⁸ CRO, Ca/E9/ 1.

the housing on Warwick Road, containing dwellings with from three to seven bedrooms, also had few lodgers.⁸⁹

From this evidence it is possible to conclude that female lodgers were more likely to live in the homes of respectable working-class families rather than in middle-class homes or with poorer sections of the working-class, who already lived in overcrowded conditions. Although munitions workers may have had to share beds and forego privacy, the camaraderie of such an existence may well have made this preferable to hostel accommodation where girls were subject to stricter regulation and the closer attentions of welfare officials and matrons. However, welfare officials also visited girls in lodgings to check up on their surroundings and on the girls themselves. Lists of suitable lodgings for female workers were compiled by the welfare department with the help of local voluntary organisations.⁹⁰ The problem was considered important enough in Carlisle to employ eight paid lodgings investigators - the highest number in the country.⁹¹ Not every munitions worker found a friendly home environment in lodgings. The Ministry had to make a public announcement in October 1917 that workers could not be ejected from lodgings if they had observed the conditions of tenancy, unless the Ministry had authorised the removal.⁹²

However, living in smaller family groups was probably greatly preferred to hostel life with larger numbers and more unfamiliar faces to contend with. Additionally, as Deborah Thom has suggested, working-class families would much prefer lodging *their daughters* with other working-class families where supervision would be more in tune with their cultural expectations.⁹³ There were disadvantages, however. Those lodging in Carlisle would have had earlier starts to get to work on time, and the

⁸⁹ CRO, Ca E 9/32, Carlisle Housing Survey, Summary.

⁹⁰ L.K. Yates, *The Woman's Part*, p58. Mun 5/92/346/4, Welfare Work at Lancaster Factory, 1916-19.

⁹¹ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/112, Ministry of Munitions Welfare and Health Section, 1917.

⁹² *CJ*, October 5, 1917.

⁹³ D. Thom. 'Women Munitions Workers at Woolwich Arsenal in the 1914-18 War', MA thesis, University of Warwick, 1976, Chapter 4.

regularity of hostel meals would be absent. However, the prospect of getting away from the factory environment on a regular basis must have been an important factor. Also, Carlisle could offer a host of leisure attractions with which township life could not compete.⁹⁴ For many young females that may well have been a significant factor in being able to get away from the dull conformity and long hours of the munitions factory. Hostel life could offer a stable environment with comforting routines, but little in the way of the excitement of urban life.

Conclusion

Gretna female munitions workers' experience of housing was varied. Hostel life could involve living among large numbers of fellow workers in brick buildings housing over 100 people or in small groups of less than 10 in wooden bungalows. This was a new experience for many and often initially unsettling. It involved submitting to conformity for the greater good of the community, overriding cultural differences and adapting to regulation and routine. The Ministry of Munitions clearly tried to modernise the image of the hostel in line with the image of the independent working girl. Although Woollacott is right to see such hostels as less rigid than their pre-war counterparts, the stigma of the hostel still lived on. By the end of the War working-class suspicion of such a system remained intact, judging by the numbers of vacancies in hostels. Strategies involving the isolation of 'rough' or 'dirty' girls suggests that pre-war connotations of institutionalism and censure were far from eradicated. In the hostels the State promoted welfare but made it clear that its provision entailed responsibilities and acceptable standards of behaviour. Working-class suspicion of hostel accommodation was still apparent in World War II, despite the Ministry of Supply appointing Holiday Camp magnate Billy Butlin to oversee facilities which, as in World War I, included games rooms, dancing and cinemas.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ See Chapters 4 and 5.

⁹⁵ Mass Observation, People in Production, (1942), p. 223.

Living in lodgings may have meant putting up with cramped living conditions, but overcrowding was already a feature of urban working-class existence before 1914. North-East England, where many of the Gretna workforce was recruited, had some of the highest levels of overcrowding, according to 1911 census figures.⁹⁶ Lodging with other working-class families may well have been preferable to the constant attentions of matrons and welfare supervisors. It would also have enabled lodgers to escape from the workplace atmosphere of Gretna and Eastriggs.

There was undoubted nervousness about girls living outside their normal family structure and their contact with the world of industrial work. Here were females 'in masculine costumes', to use L.K. Yates' phrase. Would their traditional gender roles as obedient daughters and future mothers be compromised? Yates was at pains to point out that, despite new circumstances, nothing really had changed. Hostel inhabitants were being supervised by matrons and therefore 'life approximates to that of a large family'.⁹⁷ The face of the model townships of Gretna and Eastriggs also mirrored contemporary attitudes to young female munitions workers. Behind the garden city-type cottages of skilled male adult workers and their families lay the temporary structures of barracks and hostels for the young, single female workforce. After the war these could be converted into family cottages when normal life could replace the upheaval and uncertainties of wartime existence. In the same way young workers could discard their 'masculine costumes' and return to their roles as future mothers and wives.

⁹⁶ M. Dauntton, *Councillors and Tenants* pp. 26-7.

⁹⁷ L.K. Yates, *The Woman's Part*, p. 59.

Chapter 4

Munitions Workers and Drinking

A Civilised Drink?

In August 1916 a newspaper reporter from the Yorkshire Post, on a visit to Carlisle, went into the Gretna Tavern, a state-run pub opened to attract munitions workers. Inside, he found groups of young women with their soldier boyfriends and older women with husbands. There was little evidence of men drinking together - only 'a few navvies' were present, 'drinking in a cheerless bar'.¹ In April 1917 the Carlisle Journal noted that another state-run pub, the Annan Tavern was taking £200 a week in food sales, but 'the capacity of the beer-hall has not been fully tested'. Because spirits were unavailable there, 'the man who wants drink only has not been attracted by the taverns'. Similarly, food sales represented 75 per cent of total takings at the Gretna Tavern during April 1917.² This was because female munitions workers flocked to such establishments, but were not interested in drinking alcohol, according to the Rev. Bramwell Evens, a Wesleyan minister in favour of State regulation of alcohol.³ The Yorkshire Post reporter had come to Carlisle to view a new phenomenon: a State-run drinks industry that was designed to solve the 'problem' of heavy drinking in wartime. This was particularly pertinent to the Carlisle area, due to the proximity of the Gretna munitions factory. The Government's solution was simple and draconian: limit the availability and access to alcohol to lessen the likelihood of absenteeism or inefficiency of workers. Instead of a culture of heavy drinking in male-dominated pubs, the Government placed an emphasis on 'sanitised' drinking in an environment that promoted the sale of food and soft drinks rather than purely alcohol. Brian

¹ CJ, August 25, 1916.

² See leaders in CJ, April 20 & 27, 1917.

³ Rev. B. Evens, The Truth About Direct Control in Carlisle, 1917, pp. 8-11.

Harrison has called the pub 'a masculine republic.'⁴ In World War I the State attempted to take over this 'republic'. One of its tactics was to produce a more family-orientated atmosphere where women were allowed access. However, this feminisation of the pub, in a bid to counter heavy drinking by men, laid the state open to accusations of allowing females easier access to drink. Critics of government intervention were quick to use this aspect as an ideological weapon in the war against the encroachment of the state. One such critic, the teetotalist minister the Rev. Wilson Stuart, far from seeing such model pubs as islands of civilised behaviour in a sea of alcohol-fuelled barbarity, painted a picture of state-sponsored debauchery:

'The nationalised public-house is, in a city like Carlisle, the inevitable rendezvous of such women with all that alcohol plus vice means in terms of race poisoning by alcoholism and syphilis, potential crime, suicide and domestic tragedy. . . . These Women's Bars instead of being . . . the safest and most modest place in a public-house, are just the deadliest and most shameful.'⁵

Stuart's diatribe was an extreme example of opposition to government involvement in the drinks trade. By equating drinking with immorality and criminality it suggested that, far from such a system alleviating wartime social upheaval and increasing national efficiency, it was doing the very opposite. But it does reveal a contemporary concern about the public visibility of female munitions workers and their entrance into, not only the male bastion of industrial work, but also into places of entertainment such as the pub. The two questions this thesis attempts to answer on this topic are: 1) Was drinking by Gretna female munitions workers a problem during wartime? and 2) How did government attempts at reforming male drinking habits affect women workers? Firstly, however it is necessary to place wartime

⁴ B.Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (Keele, 1971) (1994 edn), p. 47.

⁵ Rev. W. Stuart, Drink Nationalization and its Results: The Carlisle Experiment, nd, p. 31.

drinking into context by discovering pre-war attitudes to women and drink and state involvement in the drinks trade.

Women and Drinking

Drinking has occupied a central role in male working-class culture. Willmott and Young, in their investigation into family and kinship networks in East London in the 1950s, observed that for many men the pub bar was as much a part of their living space as a room in their home, and that one was reserved for members of their own sex, while the other was not.⁶ That statement is broadly true of much of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Despite growing concerns resulting from research into the effects of alcohol, beer was still being advertised as imparting strength and drinking was seen as asserting one's virility, thus forming a link with a predominantly male cultural practice. Drink-fuelled exertion was associated with strenuous trades from urban labourers and craftsmen to rural agricultural workers.⁷ This association of alcohol with both work and non-work time was deeply enmeshed in pre-industrial practices, where work rhythms involved alternate bouts of intense labour and periods of inactivity which encouraged drinking and socialising with work colleagues.⁸ Industrialisation enforced different work rhythms and attempted to place a greater distance between work and non-work time. Disapproval of drink in the workplace was one such tactic. However, as Harrison points out, industrialisation could also encourage drinking: during stressful periods of unemployment or by forcing migrant workers into new environments where traditional sanctions on conduct were weakened.⁹ This last point is an important

⁶ M. Young and P. Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London, (1957), pp. 23-4.

⁷ Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 40

⁸ See, for example, E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism,' in Customs in Common, 1993, pp. 352-403.

⁹ Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 41.

factor in discussing female munitions workers and drink at Gretna during the Great War.

Why did the pub retain its cultural hold on the working-class despite attacks on its centrality? The most salient point is that the pub was always much more than just a drinking centre. If, as Paul Thompson maintains, 'beer was the basis of leisure', the pub was also one of the few places for relaxation outside the home which was almost always close by and free.¹⁰ Lady Bell, writing of working class life in turn-of-the-century Middlesbrough, made the same point in 1907.¹¹ It provided a break from overcrowding or meagre comforts of the working-class home and a refuge from wives, children, parents or siblings. At the pub men reinforced their work networks by meeting colleagues, talking about work and hearing of job opportunities. They also heard news of sport and political events. In addition pubs organised outdoor and indoor sports, musical entertainment and provided meeting places for friendly societies, trade unions and clubs revolving around the pursuit of particular hobbies.¹²

If Harrison is right as identifying the pub as a masculine republic, this should not obscure the fact that women were also present in pubs, or that women did share in a drink culture. However, part of women's reason for incomplete access to this cultural practice was their lack of surplus cash and restrictions on free time due to domestic duties and husbands' or families' expectations of traditional gender roles.¹³ But women who did drink, at least in public, were the most visible and therefore open to criticism. This included suspicions that they were neglecting their domestic roles, failing to provide a proper home and also inducing men to resort to pub-going for a bit of comfort. The Rev Henry Worsley had identified this 'problem' in 1849, and in

¹⁰ P. Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (1975) (second edn 1992), pp. 170 & 173.

¹¹ F. Bell, *At the Works* (1907), p. 246.

¹² See, for example, H. Cunningham, 'Leisure and Culture', in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, Vol II (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 315-16, and R. McKibbin, 'Work and Hobbies in Britain 1880-1950,' in *The Ideologies of Class* (Oxford, 1991), p. 162.

¹³ A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester 1900-1939* (Buckingham, 1992), pp. 58 & 61-3.

1907 Lady Bell still stressed this as a cause for concern - and a greater problem for the household than if the husband drank.¹⁴ Drinking had long been associated with immorality and crime. Between 1857 and 1892 the largest single offence in summary convictions for both men and women was drunkenness.¹⁵ Drink was seen by social researchers such as Seebohm Rowntree as a cause of poverty, being, along with gambling, identified as 'improvident expenditure'.¹⁶ Furthermore, there were fears that drunkenness was a hereditary defect carried by women and endangering the survival of the race. Early Victorians emphasised the link between drink and sin and suffering, but by the late nineteenth century drink was also equated with a loss in national efficiency.¹⁷ The Rev. Wilson Stuart's attack on state intervention in the drinks trade, cited above, incorporated all these elements.

Cultural condemnation of women who drank, however, was a powerful force within working-class communities themselves. It could erode a family's respectability within the neighbourhood.¹⁸ Kate Garrett, who was born in 1899, recalled that both her parents drank heavily. Although it was accepted that some men came back home drunk and were violent towards their wives, when women returned from the pub and fought with their husbands, as Kate's mother did, this was soon noted. 'Mothers were sacred, mothers were looked up to. I would go to church on Sunday morning and meet my pals and they would say: "Your mum wasn't half drunk last night". I can't tell you the shame. It was really quite dreadful.'¹⁹ Similarly, children whose parents drank knew that family expenditure on items like clothing would suffer, if not their entire

¹⁴ H. Worsley, *Juvenile Depravity* (1849), p79, cited in G. Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (1983), p. 165. F. Bell, *At the Works*, p. 248.

¹⁵ See examples cited in L. Zedner, *Women, Crime and Custody in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 28, 31, 34 & 60.

¹⁶ B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (1901), pp. 141-2.

¹⁷ J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (1994), p. 233.

¹⁸ See Robert Roberts' comments in *The Classic Slum*, p. 22.

¹⁹ Interview with Kate Garrett, quoted G. Wood and P. Thompson, *The Nineties: Personal Recollections of the 20th Century* (1993), p. 91.

financial status.²⁰ Female members of families who did drink helped to define that family's status within the neighbourhood. Drunkenness could leave a stigma on a family: it was part of the measure that separated the 'rough' from the 'respectable'.²¹ However, local practices about women's presence or behaviour in pubs could vary. This was part of the cultural apparatus of pub life which not only often segregated the sexes but also socially graded customers into tap-room, snug and lounge users.²² This system of dividing pubs up into a number of rooms also meant that supervision of different groups of drinkers was difficult, a point which no doubt made the system attractive to some customers. Pubs were a natural resort for prostitutes to find customers. Judith Walkowitz notes that snugs in some pubs, particularly in areas with large numbers of soldiers and sailors, were akin to small, private compartments that encouraged sexual intimacy. Snugs could also be entered through back alleys.²³

How did women use pubs, and what sort of females participated in this drink culture and at what levels? David Gutzke estimates that around 25-30 per cent of nineteenth century pub customers were female.²⁴ Joseph Rowntree and Arthur Sherwell's analysis of the drinks trade in 1899 noted that drunkenness offences committed by women were usually around 28-30 per cent in the United Kingdom, with urban rates noticeably higher. However, there were regional variations. In Liverpool 24 per cent of drunkenness offences were committed by females, while Belfast and Glasgow recorded 32 per cent, Manchester 36 per cent and London 38 per cent. The evidence for an increase in female drink-related offences is inconclusive. In London and Liverpool offences had declined over the preceding 20 years, while in Manchester and Glasgow they had increased. But Rowntree and Sherwell also noted

²⁰ R. Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), p. 73. E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 83, & 120-1.

²¹ R. Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 22. E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 5-6.

²² The point is made in Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 120. See also Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People* (1970).

²³ J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 156.

²⁴ D. Gutzke, *Protecting the Pub: Brewers and Publicans Against Temperance*, (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 34.

that while drink-related deaths had increased 43 per cent among males (from 60 per million between 1877-81 to 86 per million from 1892-6) the female increase was 104 per cent (25 per million to 51 per million over the same period).²⁵

In 1927 Ernest Selley's investigations in English pubs found women drinking in licensed premises in every area he visited, but, significantly, regional cultural variations differed. In the North-East, for example, and particularly in mining areas, women who frequented pubs were liable to lose status. But Selley noticed that women in textile areas went to pubs, not only with husbands, but also with female friends, probably due to having greater economic freedom.²⁶ In Carlisle women appear to have frequented pubs before the First World War in significant numbers, whereas, just a few miles north, in the Scottish Borders, this was deemed as being unacceptable. As well as regional variation, the number of women in pubs could vary from area to area in one town. Drinking could also be done by the sexes at different times. Elizabeth Roberts' study of working class women in the North-West makes it apparent that in some pubs men and women sat together, while in others they stayed apart or women stayed for just part of the night.²⁷

W.T. Stead's Daily Paper in 1903 conducted a survey of pubs in the Paddington area of London. Enumerators estimated that 22 per cent of those going into the pubs were women, but it is unclear whether they were staying to drink or whether they had come to fetch beer to consume at home.²⁸ A more comprehensive survey of pubs was undertaken by Seebohm Rowntree in York in 1902. Rowntree concluded that women from the poorer areas of York used pubs more frequently than those in respectable working-class districts. In one 'dingy' pub in a narrow slum street on a Saturday 550 people entered between 6am and 11pm, the busiest times being at mid-day and

²⁵ J. Rowntree and A. Sherwell, The Temperance Problem and Social Reform (1899).

²⁶ E. Selley, The English Public House As It Is (1927), pp. 123-4.

²⁷ E. Roberts, A Woman's Place, p. 115.

²⁸ Cited in R. Thorne, 'The Movement for Public House Reform 1862-1914', in Diet and Health in Modern Britain, D.J. Oddy and D.S. Miller (eds) (1985), pp. 233 & 236.

between 8pm-11pm. Women comprised 32.5 per cent of that total, but only 44 of the 179 women stayed longer than 15 minutes. Even fewer women stayed longer than 15 minutes on the following Sunday and Wednesday. On the Saturday night the pub was packed with men and women 'shouting and singing, but (with) no serious quarrels or rows'. In another pub in a similar area 28 per cent of Saturday customers were women who had consumed drink on the premises. The off-sales facility was used by children only.²⁹ In a third pub in a more respectable working class area only 9 per cent of customers were women. More females used the off-sales and only five of 200 women seen going in over three days stopped for more than 15 minutes, and four of these were accompanied by men.³⁰ This suggests that respectable working-class women, in York at least, were less likely to frequent pubs and more likely to drink at home, whereas women from poorer areas were tolerated in pubs to a larger extent. It also underlines the fact that women themselves had a diverse range of opinions about drinking., ranging from hostility, to toleration of moderate drinking and through to regular bouts of heavy drinking, as Andrew Davies makes clear in his study of working-class culture in Salford and Manchester.³¹

Although Rowntree's investigations shed light on women and public drinking, it offers little in the way of distinguishing the age range of females. Women who did drink in pubs appear to be often married, either drinking with women of a similar age or accompanying husbands, particularly at weekends. Young, single girls were less likely to drink in pubs in case they were mistaken for prostitutes.³² Diane Kirkby finds the same fears expressed in Australia about barmaids whose presence in pubs was often seen as morally dubious.³³ Seebohm Rowntree was clearly uneasy about

²⁹ B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty*, pp. 314-21.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³¹ A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, pp. 61-73.

³² D. Gutzke, 'Gender, Class and Public Drinking in Britain During the First World War', *Histoire Sociale*, 27 (54) (1994), p. 368.

³³ D. Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 46 & 77.

the fact that some York pubs were attracting 'girls'. He detected little drunkenness but claimed that these girls were meeting men in pubs 'for immoral purposes'. In addition, despite police estimating there were only around 20 full-time prostitutes in the city, there was 'much immorality' in York. Rowntree suggests that these girls were akin to part-time prostitutes, but this assumption was surely a misinterpretation of girls' presence in pubs, many of whom would be merely looking for a place in which to socialise with males. Rowntree thus equated single girls in pubs with immorality.³⁴

Fears were growing from the late nineteenth century that drinking by women was on the increase. Charles Booth, in his social investigations in London in 1888, certainly thought so. However, he noted that factory girls drank, but he believed it was the young married and middle-aged women who drank too much, and not necessarily just the poorer sections of society.³⁵ The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Licensing Laws in 1899 also expressed concern about the increase in female drinking. Disapproval of women drinking in public was believed to cause them to buy from off-licences and to indulge in secret drinking. The commission, which looked into evidence collected between 1896 and 1899, heard from 259 witnesses, but, as David Wright and Cathy Chorniawry point out, only four of the witnesses were women.³⁶ Thus women were identified as complicating the drink problem by both their presence and non-presence in pubs. The actual rate of female home drinkers is, of course, a matter of speculation. Women in pubs were more visible and thus more liable to censure.

The concern about female drinking is also reflected in an inquiry in 1907, conducted into the frequency of visits to pubs by women and children in a number of cities.³⁷ Here the anxiety appears to be centred on women putting their own children

³⁴ B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty*, p. 313

³⁵ A. Fried and R. Elman, *Charles Booth's London* (1969), p. 248.

³⁶ D. Wright and C. Chorniawry, 'Women and Drink in Edwardian England', *Historical Papers/Communications Historiques* (1985), p. 118.

³⁷ *Women and Children in Public Houses: Information Obtained from Certain Police Forces as to the Frequenting of Public*

in moral danger by bringing them into pubs. The observations were conducted by local police forces, watching pubs in working-class districts in Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Sheffield over a number of days. Birmingham's Chief Constable noted that the practice of women frequenting pubs with babies or young children was 'very extensive', and in the mornings as well as at night. He reported: 'In the lower quarters in Birmingham women resort to public houses shortly after 10 o'clock in the morning in large numbers, when they are supposed to be doing their shopping'. The Chief Constable of Bristol thought that 'if women could be prevented from taking children into public houses the homes would not be neglected to such an extent as in some cases they are, and the statistics for drunkenness would be materially lessened in the near future'.³⁸

What was attracting women to pubs, apart from alcohol and the need for companionship outside the home environment? The Chief Constable of Leeds noticed that licensed premises providing music were particularly popular. He suggested one way to discourage female drinking would be to prevent pubs from staging entertainments which 'undoubtedly attract women and girls in large numbers'. Dagmar Kift's observation that the popularity of commercialised music halls was because working-class people could meet there for companionship and entertainment without outside interference, could also be applied to pub entertainments.³⁹ Such leisure opportunities were attractive to females because they offered a semi-respectable alternative to the drudgery of domestic life, a point acknowledged by E.R. Henry, the Chief Commissioner of Police in London. He wrote: '... women are attracted by the warmth and glitter of the public houses which afford a contrast to the houses in which they live, and in a number of cases they are unable to leave their young children at home and there is nobody to take care of them'. Importantly, too,

Houses by Women and Children, Cd 3813 (1907).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

³⁹ D. Kift, The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict (Cambridge, 1996), p. 2.

though viewed with disapproval, it was not against the law, and a practice that was welcomed by many enterprising publicans. The Chief Constable of Manchester noted that any police attempt to discourage the practice of women bringing children into pubs was 'usually resented', both by the customer and the landlord.⁴⁰ Seebohm Rowntree, in his 1902 study of York, also noted many pubs had entertainments, even though only about 12 of the 383 licensed premises had music licences. Publicans circumvented this obstacle by employing waiters or waitresses who sang to oblige the company. Any accusations that they were being paid to perform were always hotly denied. Such places attracted young boys and girls, who, Rowntree noted, drank, but not to excess. Rowntree admitted that such an air of jollity in such places 'must prove very attractive after a day's confinement in factory or shop'.⁴¹

The drink problem became an even more prominent concern during the First World War. The Central Control Board took a deep interest in this aspect and particularly so in the State Management Scheme in Carlisle and Gretna where the drinks industry was effectively nationalised. Civilising the pub and pub culture could partly be achieved by changing the physical structure and appearance of public houses. Although direct control was a wartime experiment, its antecedents and the theory behind such projects is worth investigating.

Social Reform and the Pub

The reform of drink culture was a component of rational recreation attempts to provide uplifting recreation for the working-class.⁴² Drink was frowned upon not only by evangelicals and industrialists, but also by radicals and socialists. Apart from being believed to cause poverty, sin and suffering and reducing national efficiency,

⁴⁰ Cd 3813, Women and Children in Public Houses, pp. 6-9.

⁴¹ B.S. Rowntree, Poverty, p. 310.

⁴² See, for example, P. Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (1978). H. Cunningham, Leisure in the Industrial Revolution (1980).

drink also diverted people from political action.⁴³ Temperance and social reformers saw expenditure on drink as a diversion of cash which could be spent on other items such as food to alleviate poor health and encourage a better lifestyle. Middle-class concern over this issue also found an echo in working-class culture itself. Nineteenth century Liberalism and its ethos of self-help and self-education had struck a firm resonance among working-class people whereby abstinence was seen as a tool to achieve respectability and advance in society without the need for class conflict, but also without undue servility to more privileged members of society. The teetotalist movement included many from such a radical and dissenting background, promoting an elevating ethos which encouraged social mobility and self-confidence, 'the movement par excellence of the self-made man', in Harrison's words, linking radical and laissez-faire ideas.⁴⁴ Prominent teetotaler capitalists such as the Cadburys and Titus Salt were also involved in providing recreational and canteen facilities for their workers as well as improved housing and work conditions. Salt's temperance village utopia in West Yorkshire was such an example.⁴⁵ Feminists were also attracted to the temperance cause, seeing it as a way to channel resources away from male pleasures to those of the family as a whole. Ironically, temperance and feminist campaigns against women drinking re-enforced pubs as a masculine sphere.⁴⁶

Harrison detects a change in direction for the temperance movement from the late nineteenth century, away from voluntary persuasion to a demand for state intervention.⁴⁷ Legislation in areas such as education, working conditions and welfare extended the social role of the state by the early twentieth century. Pat Thane points out that 'its rationale was to provide a framework within which individuals

⁴³ See C. Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture 1884-1994* (Stanford, California), 1990.

⁴⁴ B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 127 & 141.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 147 & 191.

⁴⁶ D. Kirkby, *Barmaids*, p. 14.

⁴⁷ B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 191 & 336.

could become self-supporting actors within the natural order'. The nineteenth century idea of the minimal state, with welfare based on voluntary organisations along with local government assistance was under threat, although by no means defeated.⁴⁸ The development of social policies up to 1914 also began to have deep implications for the relationship between the state, the family and its individual members. Underpinning legislation on such issues as the 'family wage', and working conditions were assumptions about gender roles and dependency in society.⁴⁹ Additionally, the state began to take an interest in such areas as defining motherhood through guidance, instruction and intervention in order to prevent race deterioration.⁵⁰ The issue of women drinking was fuelled by similar concerns about their roles as mothers, leading themselves and their children into moral dangers.

Up to 1914 the idea of direct government control of the drinks trade was not a viable option. When war broke out, however, it could be justified in the name of national efficiency and of wartime production. As commercialism grew in all areas of leisure from the mid-nineteenth century, one solution to regulating the drinks trade was to take it out of the hands of the brewers. This idea was to find increasing favour with many Socialists and Liberals, but paradoxically, it also unleashed a tension between the desire to encourage working-class co-operation and self-help and the deployment of state coercion to regulate behaviour.⁵¹ The question of drink control was also linked to debates about the boundaries of state intervention. For all the ferocious lobbying of prohibition and temperance organisations up to 1914 governments had largely confined themselves to tinkering with the licensing hours and the issue of licences, particularly when under pressure from a well organised

⁴⁸ P. Thane, 'Government and Society in England and Wales 1750-1914, in The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1914, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1-63.

⁴⁹ See P. Thane, Foundations of the Welfare State (1996). S. Pedersen, Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State (Cambridge), 1993.

⁵⁰ A. Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', History Workshop Journal 5, Spring (1978), pp. 9-57.

⁵¹ C. Waters, British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture, p. 138.

brewery lobby with considerable influence inside the Conservative Party.⁵² By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, action was being taken to deal with the problem of women and children in pubs. The 1901 Intoxicating Liquors (Sale to Children) Act forbade the sale of alcohol to children under 14 in unsealed vessels in a bid to respond to fears that children were drinking from jugs while fetching them back from off-licences. The 1902 Licensing Act made it an offence to be drunk and incapable in a public place or drunk in charge of a child under seven years of age.⁵³ The issue of outright prohibition was always politically unacceptable. A first attempt at local veto, whereby local electors could vote for their own licensing arrangements, including a ban on all licenses, was made in 1883. A bill was introduced every year, but never succeeded in winning approval. The nearest attempt at success was in 1913 when The Temperance Act (Scotland) allowed a poll on local veto if requested by not less than 1/10th of electors in a local authority area. The three choices would be no change to existing arrangements, a reduction in licenses or a no-licence resolution except for special cases. However, an important proviso was that Scots electors would not get the chance to vote on local arrangements immediately as the bill would only come into force eight years from June 1912.⁵⁴

Experiments in state intervention in the drinks trade had been attempted in Scandinavia, however. In 1865 a system of disinterested management was initiated in Gothenburg, Sweden, in a bid to eliminate the profit incentive from selling liquor. A similar scheme was introduced in Bergen, Norway, in 1877. Private companies were supervised by the Government, the number of drink shops were reduced and opening hours were restricted.⁵⁵ In Gothenburg the pubs supplied food and seats and a room

⁵² D. Gutzke, Protecting the Pub (1989). R. Thorne, 'The Movement for Public House Reform', p. 231.

⁵³ G.P. Williams and G. Thompson Brake, Drink in Great Britain 1900-1979 (1980), pp. 11-14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3.

⁵⁵ The Gothenburg system is dealt with in detail in D. Gutzke, 'Gentrifying the British Public House 1896-1914', International Labour and Working Class History 45, Spring (1994), pp. 29-43.

where newspapers were available along with soft drinks and light refreshments. In Bergen no food or furniture was introduced. Surplus profits went to fund old age pensions or other types of labour insurance.⁵⁶ A similar scheme was adopted in Britain by the People's Refreshment House Association, founded in 1896. In such pubs soft drinks and food were available and also a room for reading and games. Tables and chairs were also supplied. However the Association was criticised for supposedly attracting young people to the pubs and games were withdrawn in 1901. Other Public House Trust Associations were formed, often with both local trades union leaders and businessmen on the board. Food and non-alcoholic drinks were supplied as well as beer, and one such trust - the Northumberland Trust Company - even experimented with takeaway meals. Significantly, Lord D'Abernon, who was to become chairman of the Central Control Board, was a member of the Surrey Public House Trust Company.⁵⁷ Those trusts with a limited capital eventually floundered, but those with greater fund-raising capacities grew and invested their profits in providing reading rooms, libraries, parks and some even schools and hospitals. Gutzke identifies the presence of businessmen on such trust boards as a means of promoting a sober workforce, and he is right to identify the Gothenburg system as an important precedent in British attempts to reform the drinks trade.⁵⁸

Prominent temperance advocates Joseph Rowntree and Arthur Sherwell, in their investigations into drinking in 1899, had studied the Scandinavian system before calling for a local management scheme, offering 'healthful recreation' in 'People's Palaces' rather than in brash commercialised pubs. Rowntree and Sherwell called for localities to organise and control the drinks trade under central direction, with profits going to the state and given back as grants to improve recreational facilities. Outright direct control, they conceded, would be 'clearly inadmissible'.⁵⁹ By 1914

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 31-5 & 39.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁹ J. Rowntree and A. Sherwell, The Temperance Problem and Social Reform, pp. 393-424.

many people would still have agreed that direct control was unacceptable, but wartime priorities and the burning question of national efficiency and productivity became central issues once hostilities broke out. What still seemed so utopian to some and draconian to others could now be linked to an issue which concentrated everyone's mind: the very issue of national survival.

The Central Control Board

Restrictions on drinking, once Britain entered into war with Germany, were swiftly implemented. On August 31, 1914 the Intoxicating Liquor (Temporary Restrictions) Act was introduced, restricting opening hours and suppressing a number of public houses. Unsurprisingly, the measure was not universally popular. Between September and October 19, 259 out of 1000 licensing districts had restricted hours: by the end of the year the figure had risen to 500. From September 4 a closing time of 11pm in London was introduced. From October 19, a 10pm closing time was imposed throughout much of Britain.⁶⁰ In Carlisle, however, magistrates ordered all pubs and clubs to be closed at 9.30pm, despite a plea by the local Licensed Victuallers Association for a 10pm closing.⁶¹ A few months later drinking restrictions were further introduced throughout the country. Lloyd George, in a speech in Bangor in February 1915, remarked that 'Drink is doing more damage in the war than all the German submarines put together'.⁶² Such hyperbole may have delighted his audience, but it was, as Rose correctly states, 'a wild allegation'.⁶³ However, such concerns heralded the formation of the Central Control Board (CCB) in April 1915 under the Defence of the Realm (Amendment No. 3) Bill. The inference in Lloyd George's speech, and also repeated in a Government report in April 1915, was that

⁶⁰ A. Marwick, *The Deluge*, 1965 (1991 edn), p. 104. P. Haydon, *The English Pub: A History* (1994), p. 274.

⁶¹ *CJ*, September 12 & 22, 1914.

⁶² Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* Vol I (1938), p. 144.

⁶³ M.E. Rose, 'The Success of Social Reform?: The Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) 1915-21', in M.R.D. Foot (ed), *War and Society* (1973), note 8, p. 298.

drinking was hampering Britain's war effort, particularly in munitions work. This claim has been doubted by a number of historians. Marwick attributes the problem to a tiny minority of habitual drunkards, while Turner is also sceptical.⁶⁴ DeGroot also makes the pertinent point that if a drink problem did exist it was not solely confined to one class.⁶⁵ Concerns were also expressed over drinking by working-class women, as newspapers fanned the flames with allegations of drunkenness and debauchery. Such stories played on fears that women and girls, freed from the supervision of fathers and husbands during wartime, would lose control. In fact, convictions for female drunkenness dramatically decreased from 35,765 in 1913 to 7,222 by 1918, the biggest fall being from 1916 onwards.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, putting forward the idea that drink was hampering the war effort was always likely to be a sufficient justification for the Government to take action. Christopher Addison, who left the Board of Education to become under-secretary to Lloyd George at the Ministry of Munitions in May, 1915, was firmly convinced that this was a perfect opportunity for the state to intervene in the control of drink. In his wartime diary, Addison recorded that Lloyd George was in favour of purchasing the whole drinks trade, though admitting it would be financially impracticable and unlikely to be endorsed by the whole Cabinet. Addison, however, thought such a move would be 'a first rate national investment, even as a financial operation'.⁶⁷

The Central Control Board was convened under the chairmanship of the banker Lord D'Abernon. D'Abernon was also active in the world of philanthropy, having links with a number of voluntary organisations such as the YWCA. These two separate elements, philanthropy and financial awareness, perhaps sum up what part of the work of the CCB was intended to cover. Rose sees the Board as not only designed to

⁶⁴ A. Marwick, *The Deluge*, p. 105. J. Turner, 'State Purchase of the Liquor Trade in the First World War', *Historical Journal*, 23, 3 (1980), p. 597.

⁶⁵ G. DeGroot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War*, 1996, p. 237.

⁶⁶ S. Pankhurst, *The Home Front* (1932) (1987 edn), pp. 98 & 101.

⁶⁷ C. Addison, *Four and a Half Years* Vol. I (1934), p. 72.

meet a wartime emergency situation, but also as having a social reforming role with the purpose of changing drinking habits as well as the drinks trade itself. Turner is much more sceptical of this claim, insisting that any attempts at social reform were accidental.⁶⁸ However, the work of the CCB, discussed below, certainly indicates that Rose is correct in identifying this aspect.

The members of the Board comprised a broad coalition of political appointees, businessmen, brewery representatives and temperance advocates, although, as Turner points out, without any prohibitionists or outright hostile brewery representatives.⁶⁹ Philip Snowden, from a teetotal, Independent Labour Party background and John Hodge, later the Minister of Labour from 1917, were the Labour representatives. Neville Chamberlain and Major Waldorf Astor, the chairman of the Observer, represented the Conservative Party. Sir William Lever, the soap magnate and Colonel John Denny, head of a Dumbarton engineering firm, came from industry. The Rev. Henry Carter, of the Wesleyan Temperance Society, and brewer W. Waters Butler represented opposing viewpoints. Other members represented Treasury, Admiralty and Home Office interests. Sir George Newman, principal medical officer to the Board of Education was also a member, reflecting a concern with the latest scientific thinking into the effects of alcohol on the body.⁷⁰

The Board had powers to close any licensed premises or clubs or compulsorily purchase them with compensation, regulate opening hours, prohibit or restrict liquor sales, dilute alcohol, and ban the practice of 'treating' - buying rounds of drinks for others.⁷¹ Specific attention was directed towards areas containing large numbers of military forces or munitions works. The first CCB order covered Newhaven, in July 1915, to check drunkenness among troops embarking for France. The following

⁶⁸ M.E. Rose, 'The Success of Social Reform?', p. 74. J. Turner, 'State Purchase of the Liquor Trade', p. 591.

⁶⁹ Turner, 'State Purchase of the Liquor Trade', p. 606.

⁷⁰ For a full list of wartime members, see M.E. Rose, 'The Success of Social Reform?', pp. 299-300.

⁷¹ Cd 8243, Second Report of Central Control Board, 1916, p. 7.

month Southampton, Barrow, Dartford, Bristol, the North East coast, Merseyside, Newport, Cardiff, Barry and central Scotland were included. By 1916 most of Britain was subject to CCB regulations. In early 1916 the Board took over the running of the drinks business rather than merely controlling it from above in three areas: at Enfield Lock, a site of a munitions factory to the east of London, at the North Scottish naval bases of Invergordon and Cromarty, and at Gretna. Board members, including Philip Snowden, made a personal inspection of the Gretna area and in March 1916 the State Management Scheme, as it was called, was introduced in the Annan area.⁷² In June and July of that year the Board extended the area to cover Carlisle and also widened the south-west Scottish district to include Gretna's neighbouring villages of Ecclefechan, Kirtlebridge, Canonbie and Powfoot.⁷³

Such swift action and the Board's decision to extend the area to include Carlisle drew an angry response from opponents of the scheme in Parliament. The line adopted by those championing the brewery trade was that the Government were attempting to usher in a social experiment under the guise of wartime necessity, a forerunner, in fact, of the nationalisation of the drinks trade throughout the country. Colonel John Gretton, an influential brewer MP and a member of the Brewery Society's Parliamentary Committee, asked Christopher Addison in April 1916 why Carlisle, which was not strictly a munitions area, had come under CCB control? Col. Gretton obligingly answered his own question. It was 'simply to make an experiment. There are not many breweries there and there are not too many trade interests; therefore they know what happens to an area well separated from other areas in which they can make an experiment. This experiment is to be made at the public expense . . . We want our money for war purposes and not for experiments in areas which are not munitions areas.' Dr. Addison replied that Carlisle was, in fact, only a few miles from the Gretna factory, which was 'the biggest munitions enterprise of the whole

⁷² P. Haydon, *The English Pub*, p. 277. C. Cross, *Philip Snowden* (1966), p. 138-9.

⁷³ See the reports of the extension in *AO*, March 24, 1916 and *CJ*, June 13, 1916.

Kingdom', and where 'thousands of labourers go in and out of Carlisle every day'. Another critic of the scheme, Sir William Bull, described the work of the CCB as 'very un-English'.⁷⁴

The invasion of the Gretna and Carlisle area by thousands of construction workers, from around August 1915, did cause great social problems. While those outside the area may have viewed the State Management Scheme with deep mistrust, there were some in Gretna and Carlisle who were only too pleased to see its introduction. The Dumfriesshire and Carlisle police forces, for example, were willing enforcers of CCB policies. In July 1916 the Chief Constable of Dumfriesshire received a letter from the CCB, stating that they were considering extending restrictions to the town of Langholm and asking him for his comments. The Chief Constable wrote back that, in his view, direct control should be extended, not only to Langholm, but to the whole of the county.⁷⁵ Locally, a dramatic increase in convictions for drunkenness could be blamed on the male Gretna construction workers. A Carlisle Journal leader commented that the majority of excess drinking was attributable to 'an invasion of the district by men of all sorts and conditions'.⁷⁶ Certainly drink-related convictions soared in Carlisle in 1916. In 1914 311 people were prosecuted for drunkenness - 221 residents and 90 non-residents. In 1915 the figure was actually down slightly at 301, but over half (154) of those prosecuted were described as 'non-residents', and 75 per cent of this category were 'men who since August have come into the district to work at Gretna'.⁷⁷ In 1916 the number of drunkenness convictions had rocketed to 964, an increase of over 200 per cent. The Carlisle Chief Constable stated that 788 of those convicted worked at Gretna. There were also 37 recorded assaults on the police, a

⁷⁴ For the full debate see Hansard, Vol. LXXXVI, April, 1916, cols. 2353-2440.

⁷⁵ D(umfries) A(rchive) 4/13/25 & 26, Correspondence between Chief Constable of Dumfriesshire and CCB, July 1916.

⁷⁶ CJ, January 25, 1916.

⁷⁷ CRO, Carlisle Chief Constable's Annual Report November 1915-16, Proceedings of the Council and Committees, Vol. XXVII, p140.

record number.⁷⁸ Over the border the Chief Constable of Dumfriesshire reported 667 crimes in 1915, 159 of which were drink-related offences. In 1916 the figure had shot up to 1,628 crimes, 384 of them being drink offences. Crimes involving Gretna males totalled 204, while Gretna women committed 16. Most crimes were either petty offences or drink-related.⁷⁹ The CCB's policy of restricting opening hours and liquor outlets was strictly applied, but it is clear that they failed to completely prevent alternative arrangements made by the drinking population. In December 1916 the Dumfries Chief Constable received a letter from the Board asking him to check on a young man who had been observed buying large quantities of spirits in Carlisle and taking them back over the border. He seemingly came to Carlisle two or three times a week and bought 10 or more quarts of spirits at a time.⁸⁰ Liquor could also be obtained in some hostels at Gretna. In September 1917 a hostelkeeper and his wife were charged with selling whiskey without a licence to an Easttriggs labourer. The case was adjourned sine die, however, as the labourer witness had left the district.⁸¹

Munitions Workers and Pubs

It is apparent, therefore, that the main concern of the CCB was to restrict the drink supply to male workers at the Gretna factory and to stem the increase in drunkenness, particularly in the city of Carlisle. When direct control was introduced into the area in March 1916, the first wave of women workers had not yet arrived in the area and there were still thousands of construction workers residing in Gretna and Carlisle, many looking to the pub as their main recreational outlet. However, with the arrival of female operatives, the Carlisle Local Committee, which helped to formulate local CCB policies, co-opted three women, including Miss Creighton, the local organiser of

⁷⁸ Ibid., Carlisle Chief Constable's Annual Report November 1916-17, PCC Vol. XXVIII, p. 86.

⁷⁹ DA, Police 1/7, Dumfriesshire County Police Annual reports for 1915 & 1916.

⁸⁰ DA, 5/13/9, Letter from CCB to Dumfries Chief Constable, December 28, 1916.

⁸¹ CJ, September 28, 1917.

the National Union of Women Workers, and Mrs Scarr, a member of the Gas Workers Union. Male committee members comprised city and county councillors, including the Mayor, members of the Licensing Committee and representatives from the Trades Council.⁸²

Women were often perceived as being likely to take to drink during wartime. In November 1914 the Home Office ordered police surveillance of wives and dependants of those in the armed forces. Women reported to be drinking heavily or suspected of immoral behaviour - the two were seen as inextricably linked - could have their separation allowances stopped. This work was originally done by male police, but women police were introduced to perform this function in late 1914. In Carlisle and Gretna women police patrols were used to monitor women's behaviour in and out of the workplace. Part of their duties involved going into pubs to look for signs of drunkenness or immoral behaviour.⁸³ A Home Office report to the Ministry of Munitions in August 1915 claimed that drinking by women was on the increase.⁸⁴ Whether this meant that there was more drunkenness among females is doubtful. Evidence of drunkenness among Gretna female workers is scarce. Court cases or munitions tribunal hearings involving drunken munitions workers are noticeable by their infrequency: only a minute number were reported in the local papers..⁸⁵

The only other evidence of women being drunk in public comes from the investigations of the Rev. Wilson Stuart, a Wesleyan teetotalist minister from Birmingham. The Rev Stuart visited Carlisle to see for himself how direct control operated, and he was not impressed. He subsequently produced a pamphlet, 'The Carlisle and Annan Experiment in State Purchase and Liquor Nationalisation', in which he concluded that direct control had not curbed the problem of drunkenness. In

⁸² For a full list of members see PRO, HO185/8, CCB Carlisle Local Committee Correspondence.

⁸³ See Chapter 7 for the role of women police in supervising munitions workers.

⁸⁴ PRO, HO185/230, Report to the Central Control Board, August 12, 1915.

⁸⁵ See, for example, AQ, December 1, 1916, January 19, 1917.

a letter to the Carlisle Journal the Rev. Stuart claimed that the decrease in drink convictions since the scheme was introduced was largely due to many of the construction workers having left the area once the munitions factory was built and the influx of 'non-drinking' munitions girls. Nevertheless, the Rev. Stuart had witnessed 'many shockingly drunken people', including two women 'hopelessly drunk on their backs'.⁸⁶ The Rev. Stuart's investigations in Carlisle were used as evidence presented to the Southborough Committee on Disinterested Management of Public Houses in 1926 and published as a book shortly after. In the appendix the Rev. Stuart described his visits to Carlisle and Annan, mainly between January and March 1917. During one night visit he recorded seeing '37 drunken people in an hour-and-a-quarter in the space of a third of a mile, in a city where State liquor is sold in State public-houses by State "managers" '. These included 'two young women and a man holding each other up, collapsing in a heap now and again'. Further on he saw 'two inebriated girls' with 'a helplessly drunken soldier', who they led into an eating-house. On a later visit he counted '34 women with shawls on their heads enter a single public-house door in Caldewgate' (a working-class area, near to the city centre) in the space of 35 minutes in the early evening. Later that night he came across two young women fighting in the street: 'They lashed and rushed about perfectly wild and frenzied'. On another night he found two drunken young women one of whom was 'decently dressed with black hat and feather' incapable of standing. One was taken by two policemen to the police station. These were evidently munitions workers as they were recognised by two other munitions girls who the Rev. Stuart spoke to at the scene.⁸⁷ These lurid descriptions were obviously intended to shock: his narrative of young women out of control or leading soldiers astray was designed to repel people against the idea of state involvement in the liquor trade. However, he only identifies munitions workers as being hopelessly drunk in the last example. His reference to

⁸⁶ See CJ, June 15, 1917.

⁸⁷ Rev. W. Stuart, Drink Nationalization in England and Its Results, Appendix I, pp. 71-7.

women in shawls entering a pub would indicate that these were more likely to be local women and probably of an older generation, although he does not describe these women as being drunk. Interestingly, F.A. Harvey, the secretary of Temperance Legislation, could find no evidence of drunkenness in the Gretna township during three night visits during the summer of 1917.⁸⁸

In 1923 the State Management Scheme was still under attack from prohibitionist organisations. Replying to criticism in the United Kingdom Alliance's newspaper Alliance News about women using back-door entrances to drink in Carlisle pubs, J.S. Eagles, the Carlisle CCB manager reported to his superiors in London: 'In Scotland there appears to be a practically universal opinion which effectively prevents women going into public houses; if a woman wants to drink she buys her supplies from an off-licence and drinks at home. There is, of course, no corresponding tradition in England . . . women were drinking in Carlisle public houses before the Control Board came here and some of them are drinking still . We do not want them, and we offer them no sort of attraction'.⁸⁹ Two years later Eagles was attributing drunkenness in women to a small minority. In another letter to the CCB Eagles wrote: 'If we could only get rid of a handful of notorious recidivists there would practically be no female drunkenness at all'.⁹⁰ This suggests that the 'problem' of women drinking was not caused by wartime conditions, but was a continuation of a pre-war practice and that women who did drink heavily were more likely to be Carlisle natives.

During the War the CCB commissioned a number of reports into the subject of women and drink and they largely come to similar conclusions to the tentative proposition put forward above: that much of the excessive drinking was done by women of an older generation, whereas younger munitions workers were frequenting pubs more but were not necessarily drinking heavily. The sight of young women

⁸⁸ PRO, HO 085/227, Report on visit to Gretna, July 1917, by F.A. Harvey to CCB.

⁸⁹ PRO, HO 185/22, State Management in Carlisle: Resolutions and Propaganda. Letter from J.S. Eagles to A. Mitchell, January 4, 1923.

⁹⁰ Ibid., letter from J.S. Eagles, January 22, 1925.

visiting pubs in Birmingham had alarmed the teetotalist Birmingham White Ribbon Bands so much that they had forwarded a petition with 37,155 names, demanding that no girl under 21 be sold alcohol or be allowed on licensed premises until three months after the declaration of peace. From July 20-22 1916 a CCB-appointed committee visited Birmingham but found no evidence of an increase in drunkenness or excessive drinking among young factory workers. The committee noted that, having no experience of pub culture, organisations such as the White Ribbon Bands tended to assume that anyone in a pub was drunk and that they were confusing 'rowdyism with intoxication'. Restricted opening hours were causing concentrated drinking. The committee concluded that the adoption of male habits by female workers had led to a greater use of pubs, but most were 20 or over and were often accompanied by men. The frequenting of pubs was due to a 'gradual alteration of public opinion with regard to greater freedom of manners and customs among women, and the increased wage now being earned by women and girls'. The committee believed this trend was likely to continue. But it also noted that pubs were 'undesirable places of resort both morally and physically for young people of either sex'. It concluded that no restrictions were required but it recommended 'improvement of pubs in order to render them fit and appropriate places for women and young people'. It also called for 'education' of people in drinking habits and an increase in 'wholesome centres of social life and education', a phrase that succinctly summarises exactly what the CCB were attempting to achieve.⁹¹

A report into drinking among Woolwich workers in 1918 offered similar findings. The findings included 'a complete absence of brawling and excitement' with 'few cases of drunkenness'. Men and women in the bars were 'very good-tempered'. The report also mentioned that 'people were very well dressed', with few of the 'squalid or bedraggled' type. The number of babies or children waiting outside were 'few'. It also

⁹¹ PRO, HO185/238, Correspondence and Reports of Restriction Cttee. Enquiry into Excessive Drinking Among Birmingham Women., August 11, 1916.

commented on the rush for spirits on Fridays and Mondays among girls. Rather than a dramatic wholesale conversion to a more civilised drinking culture in all pubs, what the report would seem to indicate was that munitions workers were frequenting the more fashionable drinking places in certain areas of Woolwich. The report noted 'a great many smartly dressed Woolwich girls throng the Beresford Square houses after 8pm, drifting from house to house and consuming port and spirits . . . they seem little the worse for this form of amusement, but it is a habit they have acquired, the danger of which should be all too evident should liquor after the war return to its old strength, and the hours of sale be unrestricted'. In a survey of three pubs on a Saturday night in Beresford Square 188 women and girls were seen drinking there between 8.30pm and 9.30pm, 120 of them drinking port and spirits. Committee members also watched shifts of munitions girls coming in and out of work at noon and early evening 'and a very few of these call at any public house, and then only for a glass of stout'.⁹²

A report on drinking habits in Blackburn in early 1918 show similar findings: certain pubs packed with well-dressed women 'apparently respectable' and 'with no grounds of complaint as to their conduct'. Yet clearly the sight of young women drinking in public was a cause of unease among the authorities. Blackburn Licensing Committee reported that the Chief Constable's inspectors had noted many young women in pubs after 10pm: in one house 50 young men and 23 young women, aged from around 18-23, were drinking. The inspectors admitted there was no disorder or cause for police intervention, 'yet we think it an unhappy sign of the times that so many young females and males should be frequenting public houses'.⁹³

In February 1916 the CCB's Women's Advisory Committee's report echoed similar findings. Although drinking among women had increased, excess drinking was attributable to a minority of women who drank before the war, and specifically to poor working-class women from slum districts: 'Many of them have no decent

⁹² Ibid., Report on Drinking Conditions Among Women and Girls in Woolwich and District. Observations made between April 4-May 1, 1918.

⁹³ Ibid., Reports of inspection of pubs in Blackburn, January 1918.

standard of life and no domestic habits'. The committee attributed the problem to the removal of control by absent husbands: 'There is no need for them to be at home to prepare their husband's dinner. They are excited and eager for company and talk'. Their conduct brought 'unmerited reproach' on the majority of soldiers' and sailors' wives. The report also attributed increased drinking among munitions workers to the strain of overlong factory hours and few alternative recreational outlets. Among its recommendations were the setting up of women police groups to counteract drinking and immorality and for the NSPCC to appoint women inspectors. Factories should also appoint women welfare officers where, in a rather over-optimistic assumption: 'Their influence would probably have served to prevent the outbreaks of drinking at Christmas time'. Committed hardened drinkers should be sent to reformatories rather than being fined or imprisoned. Working-class housing should also be improved. Those who put their names to the report included the chairman Louise Creighton, from the National Union of Women Workers, Lady Frances Balfour, Mrs Bramwell Booth, of the Salvation Army, Dr Janet Campbell, from the Board of Education, and Eleanor Barton, ex-president of the Working Women's Guild.⁹⁴

Unfortunately, no inquiry seems to have been conducted into drinking among Gretna munitions workers. However, there is some evidence that teenage female drinking did increase, particularly in Carlisle. Drunkenness among females in Gretna and Eastriggs does not appear to have been a problem, but in Carlisle itself, where teenage girls could more easily escape the attentions of factory welfare supervisors, attempts were made to prevent alcohol being served to younger workers. Not surprisingly, pubs located near munitions workers' hostels were natural attractions for teenage girls, which, in turn, swiftly became attractions for young men. Possibly local complaints about rowdiness and the congregation of teenagers of both sexes led to action by the CCB. The Board subsequently introduced a ban on under-18's being served alcohol after 'considerable trouble' in the area where pubs were located near

⁹⁴ Cd 8558, Third Report of CCB (1917).

hostels. Edgar Sanders, the Carlisle manager of the CCB, in a letter to the London office, claimed that the problem had been erased due to the ban. Sanders noted that since the ban 'young men of that age do not go there.' He also claimed that State Management managers subsequently played safe by refusing to serve any woman under 21, although it is unclear how strictly this was enforced. The ban on under-18's in pubs was also welcomed by the Carlisle police as bringing about a marked improvement in behaviour.⁹⁵ Prior to the ban it appears that under 18's could be served alcohol if it was ordered with food. Although the intention was to limit alcoholic intake to one glass with a meal, this restriction could easily be side-stepped. Judging by the observations of the Rev. Wilson Stuart, it appears to have been common practice to buy alcohol and merely order a plate of biscuits.⁹⁶

From Pub to Tavern

The whole tone of Edgar Sanders' letter to his London office seems to indicate that he regarded the phenomena of young women drinking as a problem. Yet an analysis of the CCB's work in the Carlisle and Gretna area suggests that, paradoxically, women were used as a weapon in the attempt to reform working-class drinking culture. The Board launched a dramatic programme in the area, closing down the less reputable pubs and refurbishing other establishments. By the end of 1917 the CCB had reduced the number of licensed premises in Carlisle to 71 and 55 in the outlying areas, a reduction of a third. In 1916 there were 119 pubs in Carlisle and 82 in the outlying areas. Off-sales outlets were reduced from 100 to 17.⁹⁷ The Board had control of all licensed premises in the area apart from four outlets - the County Hotel, Red Lion, Crown and Mitre and the Silver Grill restaurant. This may

⁹⁵ PRO, HO185/238., Letter from Edgar Sanders to CCB, June 21, 1918 and letter from E.H. Spence, Carlisle Chief Constable to Sanders, June 9, 1918.

⁹⁶ Rev. W. Stuart, Drink Nationalization in England, Appendix III, p. 82.

⁹⁷ Cd 8558, Third Report of CCB (1917), p. 17.

have been a political move to assuage opposition from local men of standing, for these four outlets catered for a middle-class clientele.

Seven 'model' pubs were opened with the emphasis on selling food and soft drinks, rather than merely alcohol. The first of these taverns was the Gretna Tavern, named to attract munitions workers, which was opened in July 1916 by Lord D'Abernon, the chairman of the CCB. It was essentially the old Post Office converted into a food and drink establishment. The old sorting room was redesigned into a dining room with oblong wooden tables and chairs, catering for over 100 people. A buffet area was placed at one end of the room, selling soup, meat pies, sandwiches, scones, teacakes, plus tea, coffee, milk and barley water. The former Public Room was converted into a stand-up bar with limited space, thus 'encouraging' people to use the seated area in the sorting room, served by waitresses.⁹⁸ This, in theory, slowed down the pace of drinking because drinks had to be fetched by the waitresses. Beer and wine was on sale from 12-2.30pm and from 6-9pm, but the Tavern was open throughout the day, serving early breakfasts, lunches and suppers.

In November 1916 the London Tavern was opened on London Road, to the south of the city centre. It was aimed at serving the city's railway workers. At the opening, the Mayor of Carlisle stressed the fact that the tavern was a place for the whole family where women could go for a meal instead of cooking at home. The Bishop of Carlisle, Canon Rawnsley, thought that 'no greater happiness could be given to the working man than to get him to see that he could have a pleasant evening with his wife and bairns and go home really rested and stronger for tomorrow'.⁹⁹ This suggests that such establishments were not only designed for workers' comforts, but also in the interests of maintaining productivity. In 1917 five more Board premises were opened in Carlisle: the Pheasant, the Albion, the Goliath, the Irish Gate and the Citadel were opened between May and October.¹⁰⁰ The first four were refurbished pubs with a

⁹⁸ For a full description of the Gretna Tavern see report of its official opening in CJ, July 14, 1916.

⁹⁹ Report of opening of London Tavern, CJ, November 17, 1916.

¹⁰⁰ Cd 8558, Third report of CCB (1917), p. 18.

largely working-class clientele, but the Citadel was aimed at 'business people and others of a somewhat similar class', as Rowntree and Sherwell noted in their review of Direct Control after the war. Food prices were also higher than in other city taverns.¹⁰¹ The Pheasant Inn, near the Carrs Biscuit Works, featured a cafe for girls with a hot takeaway food section and also a rest room, complete with replicas of statues of chorus girls by the 15th century Italian Renaissance sculptor Donatello. The cafe had a separate entrance from the drinking area. Rowntree and Sherwell thought the Pheasant 'an object lesson in wholesale reform', but what the clientele thought of the Donatello statues is unfortunately not recorded. Rowntree and Sherwell noted, however, that the rest room was 'not freely used'.¹⁰² A delegation of trade unionists and Labour Party members, on a tour of Carlisle pubs, noted the tendency to 'high art' in some establishments, but thought the customers would be unaccustomed to such practices. Nevertheless, the pubs had 'a certain dignity and beauty'.¹⁰³ The temperance reformer F.A. Harvey, on his visit to Carlisle and Gretna in 1917, was also unmoved by the impressionist prints found in some establishments. He thought that such efforts were wasted on pub customers: 'The decorations are 50 years ahead of the people. You cannot suddenly lift men and women from squalor to an appreciation of impressionist art.'¹⁰⁴

The Globe at Longtown, north of Carlisle, was rebuilt with three main rooms. One was a large hall with a bar at one end and with four open fireplaces with chairs, tables and settles. There was also a gallery with a piano. The other rooms featured a billiards room, a reading room and a dining room, with a separate entrance. Outside was a bowling green. The pub met with an enthusiastic response from the above delegation of unionists and Labour Party members. They thought the Globe 'a beautiful building',

¹⁰¹ J. Rowntree and A. Sherwell, State Purchase of the Liquor Trade (1919), p. 46.

¹⁰² Rowntree and Sherwell, State Purchase of the Liquor Trade, p. 46.

¹⁰³ A. Greenwood, Public Ownership of the Liquor Trade, (1920), p. 180.

¹⁰⁴ PRO, HO 185/227, CCB reports on workings of Board scheme. Report on visit to Gretna by F.A. Harvey, July 1917.

with its rafters and oak furniture 'reminiscent of William Morris'. It was 'a fine example of what places of public resort should be like'.¹⁰⁵ At Annan the Annan Tavern featured similar facilities to the Globe and also provided a cinema, holding 300 people. It was, as Arthur Greenwood, a champion of state intervention in the drinks trade, noted, 'less a public-house than a social centre'.¹⁰⁶ Musical events were also held there, including an orchestra which played three days a week. Apart from such uplifting recreation, thriftiness was also encouraged. A Post Office official attended on Fridays and Saturdays to provide a savings bank facility.

The work of the CCB is described in detail in the reports of the Board throughout the war years. However, there is one aspect that is rarely mentioned in the reports, that of the introduction of 'women's bars' into several pubs in Carlisle. Such a policy is surprising, given that it contradicted the Board's general desire to include wide open spaces in pubs and to eliminate smaller rooms such as the snug where surveillance was less easy.¹⁰⁷ These 'women's bars' were not a feature of the refurbished model taverns, but were located in a number of pubs where the customers were predominantly working-class locals. Some appear to have been merely sectioned off areas of the bar. These special rooms for women, however, could not escape the notice of the Rev. Wilson Stuart, during his investigations into the State Management Scheme. Unsurprisingly, he was outraged, alleging that the State was, in effect, providing facilities for prostitutes and supplying them with alcohol. The Rev. Stuart's accounts of his visits to such bars offer a narrative of women free from supervision and dangerously out of control. 'These Women's Bars are small cubicles which I invariably found overcrowded, and with the air very bad on Saturday nights. . . . I have more than once witnessed a rather tightly jammed crowd of women dancing up and down in gross alcoholic abandon'. The Rev. Stuart's appearance in the cubicles

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁰⁶ A. Greenwood, Public Ownership of the Liquor Trade (1920), p. 105.

¹⁰⁷ Rowntree and Sherwell make this point about the Board's policy of eliminating snugs which were 'fatal to effective supervision', State Purchase of the Liquor Trade, p. 28.

produced a ribald response 'of obscene language or immodest suggestion'. He also claimed to have been accosted by women coming out of the bars, which were 'notorious among men who know their way about Carlisle drink shops'.¹⁰⁸

Women's bars were still a feature of State Management pubs in Carlisle during the 1920s when prohibitionists were still using them as a weapon to attack state involvement in the drinks trade. Replying to allegations in the Alliance News in 1923 on alleged furtive entrances to Carlisle pubs encouraging women to drink, the Carlisle State Management manager J.S. Eagles admitted that policy was to 'prevent unescorted women drinking with men'. Women accompanied by husbands normally used the smokersrooms. The rooms set aside for unescorted women were 'small, and nothing has been done to make them in any way attractive or to tempt any woman to make a prolonged stay'. Managers were encouraged to get the women out of the room 'as soon as they had their pint'. The bars were necessarily small because to make them bigger would be to encourage more women to drink.¹⁰⁹ The former Carlisle Board manager, Sir Edgar Sanders, was equally defensive when giving evidence to a Labour Party sub-committee looking into the drinks trade in 1923:

'The question of women in public-houses is an extraordinarily difficult one, and in certain parts we were forced to segregate the women in certain houses. You cannot altogether cut out a certain class of women from the public-house. They are there for a certain purpose.'¹¹⁰

What this seems to suggest is that the Board implemented this policy to contain or maintain more effective surveillance on prostitution by introducing women's bars for 'rough' women and segregating them from 'respectable' females who could drink with husbands or boyfriends in other areas of the pubs or in the model taverns. This

¹⁰⁸ Rev. W. Stuart, Drink Nationalization in England, pp. 28-31.

¹⁰⁹ PRO, HO 185/22, letter from J.S. Eagles to State Management Offices, London, January 4, 1923.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Rev. W. Stuart, Drink Nationalization in England, pp. 29-30.

policy of isolation bears a striking resemblance to the Ministry of Munitions' attempts to segregate the respectable from the rough in accommodation, where those causing 'problems' through anti-social behaviour were placed in the same hostels.¹¹¹ This is not to suggest that all those who used the women's bars were prostitutes, but it seems likely that their custom would be drawn from local women living in working-class areas around the pub's neighbourhood rather than from female munitions workers, especially those new to the area. The evidence from national enquiries into drinking among women workers mentioned above, suggests that many young munitions workers drank in certain pubs that were deemed to be fashionable. It seems reasonable to suppose that this also occurred in Carlisle, particularly when it was acceptable for munitions workers to be seen frequenting drinking establishments such as the Gretna Tavern. A newspaper report commenting on female customers at the Gretna Tavern often being young women socialising with soldiers suggests this was indeed the case.¹¹² Additionally, the CCB noted that port consumption had risen in Carlisle. The Board even arranged to swap a consignment of whiskey for port with the Manchester firm of Willoughby & Co in April 1918: perhaps a good indication of the fact that the pub clientele was partly changing with the departure of many male construction workers.¹¹³

Conclusion

The relationship between women and drinking remained tied to pre-war discourses about alcohol and its connections with poverty, sin and national efficiency. Wartime did not suddenly break this association: it brought such issues to possibly even greater prominence. Direct State intervention in the drinks industry was a wartime novelty. Part of this strategy was to allow public space for women to be seen in pubs,

¹¹¹ See Chapter 3.

¹¹² *CJ*, Aug. 25, 1916.

¹¹³ PRO, HO185/17, CCB Carlisle report to Public House Committee, April 20, 1918.

not in their own right, however, but as a means to change the masculine culture of heavy drinking. The legitimacy of women in pubs centred on the assumption that they would be accompanied by husbands, fathers or boyfriends. Young, single female workers did not indulge in heavy drinking but utilised the pub as a space for mixed-sex socialising or simply with each other. As in other areas of Britain, young munitions workers appear to have frequented certain pubs, whereas older Carlisle women remained concentrated in back-street neighbourhood pubs. This could be attributed to a divide between local females and newcomers to the area, but there is also clearly a generational aspect. David Gutzke takes an optimistic view of the work of the CCB, claiming its policy was intended to cut through class and gender segregation in leisure. The appearance of respectable working-class and middle-class girls in pubs during the war was, in effect, 'a momentous social transformation'. Gutzke also notes the class and age divide whereby poorer men and women shunned the model pubs which were more likely to be frequented by younger female munitions workers, young men and families.¹¹⁴ Gutzke's conclusions may be overdrawn. It remains true that young unaccompanied females were still deemed to be a particular problem. State management instructions to Carlisle pub managers to refuse to serve alcohol to all females under 21 tends to suggest that social transformation in this area was far from complete. However, this was probably not a problem of drunkenness, but more of a problem of containing the high spirits of teenage boys and girls congregating in certain places. Suspicion of young, single girls' motives for *frequenting pubs quite clearly outlasted the First World War*. It had not been eradicated by World War II. A report for Mass Observation in February 1943 in a London borough recorded many reservations about young women going into pubs by themselves, although females accompanied by men did not incur such strong disapproval.¹¹⁵ In reality, the public visibility of young female munitions workers in

¹¹⁴ D. Gutzke, 'Gender, Class and Public Drinking in Britain During the First World War', pp. 367-9.

¹¹⁵ D. Sheridan (ed), *Wartime Women: A Mass Observation Anthology* (1990), pp. 195-204.

pubs was much more of a problem for society than the issue of wartime female drunkenness. Additionally, male working-class drinking habits did not radically alter, despite wartime regulation. The CCB acknowledged in their 1918 report that the 'attempt under wartime conditions to resuscitate the functions of the victualling house of the past must be admitted to be somewhat of a failure', and that 'the average (male) worker prefers to take his meals at home and his intoxicants at the public house'.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ CCB, 1918 Report for Carlisle Area, 1919, pp. 6-7 & 18.

Chapter 5

Munitions Workers and the Cinema

'A World on Wings': Cinema and Leisure

When Ernest Taylor, the Social Manager of the Gretna factory, wrote his report on recreational provision by the Ministry of Munitions, he could not help observing that one amenity stood out in its overwhelming popularity: the cinema. Nothing 'had afforded greater pleasure to the workers' at Gretna and Eastriggs than the two picture houses erected by the Ministry of Munitions'. 'Many thousands of patrons' had used these facilities during the War. Taylor, however, also expressed concern about an aspect which had a particular wartime resonance: the content of films, and, in particular, the sexual content.¹ He raised this subject because the audience for such films at Gretna and Eastriggs included a significant proportion of young, female workers. The popularity of film was undeniable. It had the virtue of providing a counter attraction to the pub, thus helping to reduce drunkenness. However, cinema presented problems too: it was where men, women, young boys and girls met socially, largely in an environment of darkness. Young, impressionable boys and girls were watching films which dealt openly with topics of sexual relationships, infidelity and immorality. Contemporary discourses on the cinema centred around the respectability of such entertainment, how film could be used for 'healthy amusement', how people behaved in cinemas and what form of regulation was needed to protect the audience. Central and local authorities, the film industry, educationalists and religious bodies all offered their contributions. That those who articulated concern and advice about cinema audiences were the least likely to be regular cinema-goers is, perhaps, not surprising. It mirrors similar debates about the working-class and drinking culture in

¹ IWM, Women's Work Collection, Mun 14/10, HM Factory Gretna: Report of the Social and Recreation Department manager, pp. 5-6.

public houses. An analysis of these debates is the main focus of this chapter, particularly in relation to working-class women and cinema.

The cinema opened new leisure possibilities for women in the early twentieth century. Its chief feature was its accessibility, particularly for women, regardless of age, marital status, class, cultural or ethnic background.² In that factor alone it distinguished itself from the other dominant pattern of leisure available to the working-class, which was drinking. Pub culture, with its aura of male exclusivity, sometimes tolerated a female presence, but did not always welcome it. Male drinkers often resented this female invasion, while social reformers saw women's presence in pubs as liable to add to the problem of drunkenness and immorality. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, while female munitions workers created their own space in this culture, it was begrudgingly conceded. Young single girls, in particular, were always regarded with suspicion. Cinema, on the other hand, was more welcoming. Film makers and exhibitors treated women as an important part of their natural audience. Kathy Peiss and Miriam Hansen see the cinema as a significant component in the change from a homosocial Victorian culture to heterosocial modernism. This change included a redefinition of gender relations. This new form of leisure promoted mixed-sex participation and also changed definitions of female identity in relation to the family. Images of women as mothers and guardians of domesticity were blurred by those of pleasure, glamour and eroticism. Films, themselves, offered visual models of heterosocial modernity.³ It was also a window to a wider cultural world. As Jeffrey Richards notes, 'living, breathing people enacted dramas before the gaze of the audience and not, as in the theatre, bounded by the stage, but with the world as their backdrop'⁴ It was, as one woman remembered her early cinema-going days, 'a world

² Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia, 1986), p. 140.

³ K. Peiss, Cheap Amusements, pp. 5-7. M. Hansen, Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 116.

⁴ Jeffrey Richards, The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema & Society 1930-1939, (1984) (1989 edn), p. viii.

on wings.⁵ Similarly, Thomas Elsaesser sees film as involving the spectator with 'uncanny directness and immediacy, by investing the world with a presence'.⁶

Thus cinema can be seen as an important feature of a modernist culture; but there were continuities with earlier forms of entertainment. Film historians detect a change in film from the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, with increasing narrativization of films. Multi-reel feature films began to predominate over one or two-reel comedies, documentaries and news-reels.⁷ Feature films were seen as more sophisticated and likely to attract a more respectable audience, while short comedy films dismayed critics of the cinema by their vulgarity, disrespect and inducement to lawlessness.⁸ Rachel Low, however, notes a difference between the British and American markets with one-reelers still retaining popularity in the United Kingdom. However, Low suspects film exhibitors may have continued to use shorts because of the costliness of renting longer, more ambitious films. Additionally a one-hour programme could produce a greater audience turnover, compared to a two-hour feature. But by 1916 three or four-reel dramas plus a shorter film along with a news reel or actuality film appears to have been the norm in many British cinemas.⁹ Certainly in the Carlisle area during this period both features and shorts were shown on the same bill.

This continuation of variety programmes in cinemas during the 1910s formed a link to the older forms of entertainment, such as music hall and variety. Tom Gunning has termed early film as 'The Cinema of Attractions', and noted that, particularly

⁵ Quoted from Channel Four documentary 'Pleasure Palaces', 1986, British Film Institute Archive, 8003.131.AA.

⁶ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Early Cinema: From Linear History to Mass Media Archaeology,' in Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative, T. Elsaesser (ed) (1990), p. 1.

⁷ See, for example, Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions' and Barry Salt, 'Film Form 1900-1906,' in T. Elsaesser (ed), Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative.

⁸ Sumiko Higashi, Cecil B. DeMille & American Culture: The Silent Era (Berkeley, California, 1994). Richard Koszarski, An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915-1928 (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 174-5.

⁹ Rachel Low, The History of British Film 1914-1918 (1950), pp. 25-8.

before 1907, cinema was used as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience, rather than telling a story. This direct address to the audience was more akin to music hall and its relationship with its audience. Thus early cinema 'moves outward to an acknowledged spectator rather than inward to character-based situations'. From 1907 feature films challenged this variety format. Gunning also observes that narrative film also often took the theatre as its model, producing versions of famous plays. Thus older conventions of realism and narrative coherence were blended with the immediacy of a new visual experience.¹⁰ Additionally, Sumiko Higashi sees Cecil B. deMille's change of career from the stage to film director as a process of legitimisation of cinema as an entertainment form to be taken seriously by a more 'discerning' audience.¹¹ Thus the modernity of cinema was filtered through existing forms of entertainment, mixing elements from the respectable culture of theatre and literature with the less reputable culture of music hall and variety. By the time of World War I, therefore, the film industry offered a mixture of sophistication, slapstick humour and vulgarity. Did audiences appreciate both the one-reel variety format and the more sophisticated multi-reel films, or did they go to the cinema regardless of what film was showing? Who, in effect, made up the cinema audience? This is an important question for an analysis of cinema and female munitions workers during this period.

Cinema and Its Audience

What is indisputable is the spectacular popularity of the cinema since the first public exhibition in Britain in 1896. From that date thousands of short films were produced in Britain and sold to travelling showmen and music hall exhibitors. The first theatres devoted solely to showing films were erected from 1907. By 1910 there were around 1,600 cinemas in Britain and by 1918 the number had more than doubled.¹² The

¹⁰ Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions,' in Early Cinema: Space, Form Narrative, pp. 57-61.

¹¹ Higashi, Cecil B. DeMille & American Culture, p. 7.

¹² Sarah Street, British National Cinema (1997), pp. 4-5. Patricia Petrelli, 'A Statistical Survey of the British Film Industry', in ,

National Council for Public Morals (NCPM), which investigated the role of the cinema in 1917, estimated that there were 1,075, 875,000 attendances at cinemas in a single year. There were around 4,500 theatres in the British Isles showing films and able to seat one in every three of the population. On that estimate the equivalent of the entire population of the United Kingdom were going to the pictures about once a fortnight. Cinema, therefore, was 'influencing the lives of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of every city, town and remote hamlet in the United Kingdom'.¹³

What was the composition of the cinema audience? Nicholas Hiley believes that a huge increase in the volume of working-class attendance led to a dramatic rise in ticket sales from around seven million a week in 1914 to 20.6 million in 1917. The imposition of a wartime Entertainment Duty increased the average ticket prices from 4d to 4½d, so that by 1918 ticket sales had declined to 15 million attendances a week. The film trade paper Bioscope claimed that around 7-800 theatres had closed because of increased operating costs. Nevertheless, going to the pictures still remained 'the principal organised entertainment of the working-class'.¹⁴ The gender distribution of audiences is harder to discern, particularly for Britain. A study of Toledo, Ohio, theatre audiences in 1919 indicated audiences comprised 40 per cent males, 35 per cent females and 25 per cent children under 17. Additionally, many were young. One exhibitor said that two-thirds of his daily audience were aged between 10 and 20 years of age.¹⁵ Peiss estimates around 40 per cent of working-class cinema audiences were women in 1910. Hansen, as well, detects a considerable female audience which became objects of concern by social reformers in Germany for a similar period.¹⁶ Annette Kuhn, however, believes that in Britain it was concern

James Curran & Vincent Porter (eds), British Cinema History (1983), p. 375.

¹³ (N)ational (C)ouncil for (P)ublic (M)orals, The Cinema: Its Present Position & Future Possibilities (1917), pp. vii & xxi.

¹⁴ Nicholas Hiley, ' "Let's Go to the Pictures": The British Cinema Audience in the 1920's and 1930's', Journal of British Cinema, (1998), p. 41.

¹⁵ John Phelan, 'Motion Pictures as a Phase of Commercial Amusement in Toledo, Ohio' (Toledo, 1919), cited in Koszarski, An Evening's Entertainment, p. 26.

¹⁶ Peiss, Cheap Amusements, p. 148. Hansen, 'Early Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?', in Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative, pp 235-9.

over the class and age composition of the audience that fuelled moves to regulate the cinema, rather than gender composition.¹⁷ Certainly the principal aim behind the NCPM's inquiry into the cinema in 1917 was due to a concern over children's attendance at the cinema. Part of the evidence given to the NCPM Commission included a survey conducted in Worcester by head teachers who questioned pupils about the regularity of their cinema attendance. Of 1,842 boys questioned 718 called themselves regular cinema goers; around 39%. Of 1,868 girls questioned 477, or around 25 per cent, said they were regular attenders. Around 1000 visits had been paid in a week by 800 children. The survey concluded that boys attended more than girls, with boys from poorer districts more likely to attend regularly. Another survey with information taken from 360 school departments around Manchester revealed that of 93,010 children questioned around 50 per cent in one week in February 1917 had been to the cinema at least once. Again, boys attended more than girls. An Islington head teacher, however, gave evidence to the Commission that the cinema seemed to particularly attract working-class women and children, and that women were attending more than men.¹⁸

Such evidence, however, is problematic in the same way that surveys on women drinking were, in that they relied on questions or observations by middle-class reformers and teachers and rarely direct contributions by the actual participants as to why they went to the cinema. What the available evidence seems to suggest, however, is that *both* working-class women and children comprised a significant part of the audience by 1910. It is an intention of this thesis to tentatively suggest that the *proportion of working-class women attending cinema during the First World War* increased. In particular, it was young female munitions workers who had greater access to the cinema.

¹⁷ Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship & Sexuality 1909-1925* (1988), pp. 122 & 147, note 11.

¹⁸ NCPM, *The Cinema*, pp. 126, 143, 157-62.

Cinema in The Carlisle and Gretna Area

The dramatic rise in cinema ticket sales during the First World War, even allowing for dearer prices, has already been noted above. Commentators also noticed that cinemas were exceptionally popular in two significant areas, where troops were stationed and where munitions factories were located. Monica Cosens' contemporary account of munitions workers in a shell factory included the observation that 'the Khaki girl' went to the cinema 'several times a week'.¹⁹ A report in Bioscope in March 1915 commented on the popularity of cinemas in Barrow where a large influx of comparatively well-paid munitions workers had swelled the population. Because of this working class influx 'the pictures seem to be all the rage'. In July of the same year it was noted: 'The public taste for the cinema seems to be insatiable in Barrow . . . and the fact that trade continues to flourish, and wages remain high, enables them to pay frequent visits to their favourite theatres'. In such places the cinema was taking men away from the pubs and allowing women to accompany them. In Sheffield shift-working made attendance erratic, but 'a preponderance of the feminine element is noticeable at the picture-houses'. In Barrow a two-house system was introduced to cater for shift-workers, with those who started work at 6am attending the early show and those starting afternoon shifts going to the second house. This system was also used in other areas where munitions workers on shift work were predominant, as in Carlisle and Gretna.²⁰ Some cinemas' capacities were tested regularly. The Picture House in Carlisle, had a 130-feet long auditorium with seating for several hundred. At some shows around 150 people were also standing in the gangways, a fact which earned the cinema manager a £20 fine for overcrowding.²¹ Some picture houses implemented structural changes to attract more women and a more sophisticated audience. Sunderland Picture House had a sliding roof to make it 'delightfully cool for

¹⁹ Monica Cosens, Lloyd George's Munitions Girls (1916), p. 48.

²⁰ Bioscope, March 18, p. 999 May 20, p. 799, July 1 1915, pp. 21 & 23, July 8, p. 179.

²¹ CJ, February 6, 1917.

non-smokers and ladies'. At Dunfermline Cinema House baskets of flowers hung from the verandah, while vases of roses decorated the inside. It featured tip-up seats furnished in old gold velvet, pale rose and gold pannelling on the balcony and mahogany wood pannelling downstairs. The whole effect 'induces that reposeful feeling which enables patrons to thoroughly enjoy the pictures'. The Deansgate Picture House in Manchester offered not only a cinema, but also a cafe and restaurant, tea rooms and smoking lounge. The cinema was next to an arcade of shops. A 14-piece orchestra, including members of the Halle Orchestra, were engaged to provide music not only for the film but also for restaurant patrons. The cinema seated 1000 and had a motor-driven air cooling system, an important consideration for summer attendance.²² In July 1915 the Picture House was opened in Carlisle: 'a splendid example of what a cinema should be', wrote an admiring correspondent in Bioscope. 'The furnishings leave nothing to be desired on the part of the audience.' A sketch of the exterior of the building, illustrating the article, shows doormen in elaborate uniforms in front of an imposing facade as elegantly-dressed men and women arrive and leave the premises. Inside mock-classical pillars and ornate flooring were prominent features. A tea-room was also provided, along with a lounge for customers waiting to go in. It also featured an up-to-date ventilation system and a five-piece orchestra.²³ The whole atmosphere offered an image of respectability but tinged with exoticism. Such a location may well have attracted people, regardless of what particular film was being shown, as a number of film historians have suggested.²⁴ Not all cinemas were as luxuriant, however, during the First World War. Elsewhere in Carlisle, the Stanley Hall in Botchergate had a wooden balcony with comfortable seats, while downstairs patrons made do with wooden chairs. Similarly, the Star cinema in the working-class area of Denton Holme attracted local factory workers

²² Bioscope, July 8, 1915, p. 179, August 12, 1915, pp. 731 & 733., August 19, 1915, p. 806.

²³ *Ibid.*, July 29, 1915, p. 511, August 19, 1915, p. 849.

²⁴ See, for example, Robert C. Allen, 'From Exhibition to Reception: Reflections on the Audience in Film History', in Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative, p.18. Richards, The Age of the Dream Palace, p. 18, for the 1930s.

and shopgirls who didn't have to dress up to attend such places.²⁵ What this suggests is that cinemas, like public houses, were often socially stratified. They catered for different clienteles with working-class locals frequenting neighbourhood cinemas and a more socially mobile audience, possibly including female munitions workers, attending the more luxurious cinemas. This would mirror what was happening in the use of public houses in the Carlisle area, as detailed in Chapter 4.

Overall, there were six commercial cinemas in Carlisle during the First World War, while over the border Annan boasted two picture houses. In addition the Central Control Board provided cinemas for munitions workers in Annan and at Longtown in conjunction with the state-run public houses and cafes. The Ministry of Munitions also built two picture houses for munitions workers at Gretna and Eastriggs. The significance of the cinema under central direction will be discussed below later. Carlisle and Gretna, like other munitions areas, provided a ready-made audience for the cinemas. The Carlisle Journal, in January 1916, noted the popularity of the cinema. 'Inside the building every seat was occupied and many were glad if they could gain standing room. On Saturday nights all the Picture Houses do well.' The underlying implication from the tone of the article suggests that here was a comparatively well-behaved large working-class audience who were not spending their whole leisure time drinking. The article went on: '... the desire for quiet entertainment is probably the result of pressure in various industrial activities during the week ... When people are watching pictures they are not dissipating both their money and energy in the public house.' Cinema-goers were thus endowed with an aura of respectability. The inference was that this was a sober, sensible and more passive audience, certainly when compared to what was often perceived as the potentially more aggressive and disruptive public house clientele.²⁶ Apart from offering women, either with male partners or in single-sex groups the opportunity to

²⁵ Reminiscences of Renee George, in 'Pleasure Palaces', 1986, BFI Archive 8003.131.AA.

²⁶ CJ, January 14, 1916.

engage in a socially acceptable practice, the cinema was also often a family audience, which broke with previous traditions of single-sex leisure patterns, such as pub culture.²⁷ Robert Roberts' depiction of early twentieth century Salford commented on the new phenomenon where women 'who had lived in a kind of purdah since marriage' were now escorted to the pictures by husbands, who were less likely to spend all their leisure time in the pub.²⁸ However, both sets of clientele could happily enjoy both pursuits, although the potential for censure was more likely to be directed at the pub-goer.

If the cinema attracted munitions workers in greater numbers, perhaps the main significance of this was that for some it may have become a more accessible leisure habit. While commentators noticed munitions area cinemas doing booming business, in other districts film audiences had declined. In the North-East, for example, with miners enlisting in significant numbers, cinemas around the Durham pit villages were suffering a loss of trade. Absence of men and money had therefore reduced business.²⁹ What this implies is that, unlike munitions areas, women in mining areas were not flocking to cinemas in increased numbers. This could be explained by lack of surplus cash during war-time. Another explanation is that it was still not culturally acceptable for women to go to the cinema without husbands or boyfriends in certain areas. In Gretna and Carlisle female munitions workers going to the cinema, unaccompanied by male partners, would much more likely to be common. In other words, sex-segregated leisure patterns were not changing as rapidly in some regions as in others. Because a significant proportion of Gretna munitions workers came from the North-East, then some of these females may well have adopted a new regular leisure pattern that was more socially acceptable in their new surroundings. One girl from Sunderland, for example, particularly remembered going to the cinema

²⁷ See Ellen Ross, 'Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London Before World War I', *History Workshop Journal*, Spring (1983), p. 5. Renee George's reminiscences of cinema audiences in Carlisle, in 'Pleasure Palaces', BFI Archive 8.003.173.AA, concur with this observation.

²⁸ Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (1971) (1990 pbk edn), p. 175.

²⁹ See comments in *Bioscope*, March 18, and May 13, 1915.

frequently in her time at Gretna.³⁰ She was not alone in that experience, judging by contemporary reports on the popularity of cinema in the area. Similarly, because the Ministry of Munitions and the Central Control Board provided new cinema facilities in Annan, Eastriggs, Gretna and Longtown, girls from south-west Scotland may also have been given the opportunity to become regular cinema-goers in an area where public leisure outlets for females were few and far between.

In areas where cash for cinema-going was available World War I cinema audiences proliferated. A commentator in Bioscope noted that audience numbers were holding up, but their composition was changing. The article, 'The Working Class and the Cinema', in July, 1915, was based on visits to industrial areas and what the writer called 'poorer class districts'. Here, he noted, 'audiences were mainly youths and young girls, while in the cheaper seats the majority of the audience was female', indicating that females were going to the cinema in single-sex groups as well as with male partners. In some districts 'the composition of the audience has changed, and for every man present there are at least three women'. Higher-priced seats were better patronised, while picture houses in town centres were getting a larger percentage of the higher-paid worker than ever before. More surplus cash meant spending it on a better class of cinema. He concluded: 'All round, the various houses have not suffered, for if the composition of the audience has changed the numbers have not changed'.³¹ Cinema owners and exhibitors were keen, of course, to justify this increased working-class patronage. The paradox of wartime meant that while some in society were going out and spending money on entertainment, others were laying down their lives for their country. Film trade literature promoted cinemas as helping the war effort by offering a more respectable entertainment to the working-class and maintaining morale on the home front. In Carlisle, for example, patriotism and commercial enterprise often went hand in hand. The Picture House in

³⁰ Tiddle Archive, University of Leeds, Item 123, interview with Mrs. F.N. Smith, Tape 131.

³¹ Bioscope, July 8, 1915, pp. 189 & 191.

Botchergate offered free admission to each purchaser of a war saving certificate. A draw was held for ticket holders with a 15s/6d certificate as a prize, while two certificates went to the winner of a competition for inventing the best comical title for a picture.³² Apart from displaying patriotism, the industry could promote itself as also offering a form of social service. An article in Bioscope in August 1915, commented on a cinema in a working-class district of Edinburgh where 'the poorest of the poor are given comfortable seats in a nicely fitted hall, an excellent picture programme and good music, at prices of one penny and twopence'. Instead of criticism such picture house owners deserved praise: 'More power to the men who are bringing some degree of enlightenment and entertainment to those whose lives must indeed be drab'. The cinema was 'a national necessity' and picture house owners 'were performing a patriotic duty'.³³ Such commentaries suggest that criticism of the cinema was taken seriously in war-time by the trade.

If working-class audiences retained and perhaps strengthened their allegiance to cinema-going during the First World War, then female members of that audience - and particularly munitions workers with increased spending power - appear to be a significant component. Why should the cinema prove to be such a powerful attraction? Although different cinema audiences would doubtless have divergent reasons for attending, it is significant that what was shown at the cinema had some relevance to a female audience. The cinema brought access to a wider world of consumption, particularly in the area of fashion. Films could not only be of interest because of their dramatic action or narrative but because they enabled girls to copy the fashions and appearances of the stars.³⁴ Peiss maintains that it was in the area of leisure that women experimented with a new identity: one that included the possibility of social mobility. By copying the latest fashions young working-class

³² CJ, March 1, 1917.

³³ Bioscope, 'General Notes', August 12, October 28, 1915, p. 442.

³⁴ See, for example, J. Richards, The Age of the Dream Palace, p. 47.

girls were blurring visible boundaries of class identification.³⁵ It also challenged ideas of female identity in relation to the family. Values of motherhood and domesticity were still heavily featured in film, but other images of pleasure, glamour and eroticism were promoting alternative identities, particularly for the young.³⁶ It is this problem of shifting social and gender identities that seems to have worried contemporary commentators about the dangers of cinema-going, particularly in times of social upheaval like World War I.

What is noticeable in a number of films shown during the 1914-18 period is that they address issues such as social mobility and changing gender identities. Of course, social mobility and the position of women in society were not new subjects. Playwrights and novelists from Shakespeare to Dickens had pursued the topics relentlessly. Film-makers carried on this tradition, presented it in a modern technological and highly visual format and capitalised on issues that had a profound resonance for contemporaries. As Hansen has noted, serials such as *The Hazards of Helen* (1914) featured physically attractive heroines. Such films 'featured images of female competence, courage and physical movement that marked a striking distance from Victorian ideals of femininity'. However, alongside this modern discourse was an older appeal to women on the basis of domestic ideology and the promotion of sexual purity and passivity.³⁷ Hansen identifies this tension between old and new discourses: the salient point here to emphasise, however, is that this tension was particularly applicable to female munitions workers, who, by involving themselves directly in war work, earning comparatively high wages and being much more publicly visible, were living embodiments of this disparity between competing models of female identity. It is therefore not surprising that such women flocked to the cinemas when the subject matter of films were so relevant to their lives.

³⁵ K. Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, pp. 62-3.

³⁶ M. Hansen, *Babel & Baylon*, pp. 116-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

In January 1917 the City Picture House in Carlisle showed *Out of the Darkness*, a melodrama involving a plot based on the routines of factory life. Helen Scott is a rich owner of an American cannery, where the employees are forced to work in bad conditions. Helen takes no interest in her workforce, and uses her wealth to spend freely. She loses her memory after a boating accident and is forced to take a job in her own factory. During a strike she receives a second shock which restores her memory and the film concludes when she marries the works manager. Of course, the film can be interpreted in a number of ways, but, although it relies on a Victorian melodramatic framework and ends with a happy resolution involving marriage, the film also raises issues about social mobility, working-class life and consumerism.³⁸ In August of the same year *The Eternal Grind*, a film starring Mary Pickford, drew large audiences in Carlisle. Revolving around the central character of a mill girl, it raised similar issues about class relationships and work conditions in a factory. Significantly, it was shown when the first wave of women workers came into the area. Local theatres, too, were responding to similar contemporary themes. In the same month Her Majesty's Theatre in the city put on a performance of *Brave Women Who Wait*, sub-titled 'The Munition Girls' Love Story', by Mrs. F.G. Kimberley. The plot revolved around themes of sexuality during the war, concerning accusations of infidelity of a munitions worker whose husband was in the army. Other characters included Harriet, 'a rough diamond' with 'genuine feeling and rollicking humour' which 'the audience greatly enjoyed'.³⁹ Women's choice in marriage was the subject of *Clover's Rebellion*, shown at the Picture House, Botchergate. Clover, the daughter of wealthy parents, has an arranged marriage to a duke foisted on her, although she is in love with a doctor. In suitable melodramatic circumstances, the Duke is shot at a ball arranged to announce the couple's engagement. Clover elopes with the doctor and the couple are accused of the murder. The runaways are chased by police, but the

³⁸ *CJ*, January 14, 1916.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, *CJ*, August 8 & 11, 1916.

film ends with the couple proving their innocence. The film not only raised questions of class and marriage but also managed to present the female lead in an active role, rather than her being a passive victim of circumstance.

The woman of action format also proved popular in Carlisle with *The Exploits of Elaine* attracting large audiences.⁴⁰ The serial, a sequel to the physically active female heroine format of such series as *The Hazards of Helen*, made its star, Pearl White, into a household name. In popularity polls between 1916 and 1918, run by *Motion Picture* magazine, White ranked as the third most popular female star behind Mary Pickford and Marguerite Clark. Belying her air of innocence, White's character engaged in physical stunts, showed great courage and took on criminals without a second thought. Richard Koszarski notes that her athleticism was particularly popular with European audiences, and that her vast fan mail came predominantly from women.⁴¹ Film company Pathe also ran an intense promotional campaign. Storylines of the serial were run in the News of the World, Pathe gave away 'Elaine' hats to the first thousand applicants, and a massive poster campaign heralded the series in British cities. A song, 'Elaine, My Moving Picture Queen,' was also published to tie in with the serial's popularity. The campaign covered the whole of Britain and the film was targeted at young, fashion-conscious women. What Pearl White wore on the screen, as well as what she did was perceived to be of interest to such females. 'By the release date I expect to see Scotland's "flappers" sporting the jaunty black velvet headgear of the heroine', wrote Bioscope's Scottish correspondent. The serial drew large crowds throughout the country and its success was attributed to the publicity campaign launched before the picture was released. Audiences in Carlisle in 1916 flocked to the pictures to watch White's latest escapade.⁴²

⁴⁰ CJ, April 25, 1916.

⁴¹ R. Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, p. 273.

⁴² Bioscope, August 26, p. 957, September 23, October 21, p. 323, October 28, p. 442, 1915. CJ, April 25, 1916.

Another contemporary popular serial was the *Ultus* series, written and directed for Gaumont by George Pearson from 1916. The series began with *Ultus: The Man from the Dead*. The hero is left to die in an Australian desert by his partner who makes off with a haul of diamonds. Five years later the wronged man returns as Ultus the Avenger and takes his revenge, escaping at the end of the film from his admiring adversary, the detective Conway Bass. The series continued into 1917 with storylines revolving around the battle of wits between Ultus and the detective, who attempts to capture him. However, in the second series, *Ultus and the Grey Lady*, a female companion to Ultus is introduced who aids the hero in taking on criminals. The Grey Lady, although never portrayed as Ultus's equal, is nevertheless an active female companion in a series, which Rachel Low notes, had well constructed plots with fast moving action, far above the standard of other films of the same genre. The introduction of a female character was presumably to attract the same fans of the *Exploits of Elaine* series, as well as a young male audience.⁴³ Other examples of the active female thriller genre include the *Woman from Frisco* series (1917). Its publicity campaign claimed the serial 'showed woman's ability to do anything of which man is capable,' and even described it as a 'feminist film series'.⁴⁴ A poster for the action film *The Girl and the Game* (1916) shows a determined-looking female lead with her male companion swinging along a rope above swirling flames. As Koszarski notes, such women 'were spectacularly active characters always at the dramatic centre of their films and often executing the most difficult and dangerous stunts themselves. These women were a match for their opponents not only mentally but physically.' Significantly, successful serials after the First World War shifted to emphasise male heroics, a marginalisation of the idea of the active woman in the same way that female munitions workers were quickly discarded in peacetime.⁴⁵ It is surely no

⁴³ R. Low, *History of British Film 1914-1918*, pp. 180-1.

⁴⁴ *Bioscope*, May 17, 1917, p. 607.

⁴⁵ R. Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, pp. 163-6.

coincidence that this genre of 'active women' films achieved such popularity in a period when women were more publicly visible than ever before. The film trade capitalised on such a topic by realising that females were a significant proportion of their, largely working-class, audience and targeted them accordingly, not to release films with an overtly feminist message but to cash in on such issues and place them in an escapist milieu. Film attracted its audience by entertaining them, not delivering solemn pronouncements on contemporary social concerns.⁴⁶ It was, however, this lack of seriousness that so worried social reformers.

Such films of the crime/action genre were still heavily melodramatic and also featured criminality, violence and outlandish situations. Films examining the issue of sex relations were commonplace during this period. Films like *The Girl Who Took the Wrong Turning*, *The Shop-Soiled Girl*, and *A World of Sin* promised unheard of sexual explicitness without actually delivering content that unduly shocked the film censor. The film *Heart of a Painted Woman* was advertised in Carlisle as 'a sensational "metro" drama', suggesting both sophistication and sensationalism.⁴⁷ Posters advertising such films were, in fact, often as much a concern to central and local authorities as the actual film. Following protests from the Carlisle Education Committee about the 'undesirable nature of films and posters recently exhibited in the city', the Council decided to use their powers under the 1909 Cinematograph Act in early 1917. A year later the Chief Constable had examined 761 posters before they were exhibited on hoardings: 748 were passed, ten were amended and thirteen were rejected altogether. At the same time, Carlisle magistrates banned children under six from cinemas, while those aged between six and fourteen had to be accompanied by an adult after 9pm.⁴⁸ Thus, theoretically, some married women may have had less opportunity to go the cinema if they were unable to take their young children with

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 190.

⁴⁷ CJ, February 4, 1916.

⁴⁸ CN, February 3, & CJ February 6, 1917. CRO, Proceedings of the City Council & Committees, Vol. XXIX, Carlisle Chief Constable's Annual Report, p. 68.

them. Such measures, however, would not have affected young, single munitions workers as much.

Some films did attempt to deal with contemporary situations, like women's munitions work. *A Munition Girl's Romance* (1916) featured the popular wartime theme of espionage, but also dealt with sex and class relationships. It also featured actuality shots of a munitions factory and footage of aeroplanes in flight. A *Bioscope* article on the film noted: 'There is not the slightest doubt that the work done by the women of England for the output of munitions has the hearty sympathy of the public, and any film dealing with this subject and, moreover, including a pretty love romance, is certain to be received with more than usual interest'. The plot revolves around the character of Jenny Jones, seemingly an ordinary munitions worker, but, in fact, the daughter of Sir John Harmon, the Chairman of the Air Board. This 'pretty munitionette' attracts the attention of Hickman, the foreman of the factory, and of Brandon, an aeroplane designer in an adjoining factory. Hickman attempts to court Jenny 'in a manner which is considered too impetuous by people of her class', and is knocked down by Brandon. Hickman is fooled into giving secret aeroplane plans to a German gang of spies, in the mistaken belief he is merely causing Brandon inconvenience. In the film's climax the plans are thrown from an aeroplane and retrieved by Jenny who returns them to Brandon. The latter discovers the true identity of Jenny and romance ensues.⁴⁹ It is surely significant that Jenny's role as a munitions worker has hidden her real position in society. Once dressed in khaki, and by becoming involved in the world of industrial work, technology and wartime espionage, Jenny's traditional class and gender identity is uncertain. The film attempts to resolve these contradictions by suggesting that romance can only ensue once Jenny's 'true' position in society is known. Additionally, in this new identity, Jenny faces unwelcome sexual advances from males of a lower status than her own. The film, therefore, comments on new wartime possibilities for women, while

⁴⁹ *Bioscope*, May 17, 1916, pp. 674-5.

implying that such roles are fraught with both excitement and danger, not least in the area of sexual relationships. Its attempt to couple the 'active woman' genre, although in a much diluted fashion, with a romantic theme suggests the film company was attempting to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, an indication of the direction films were to take once the feature film became firmly established.

Film, Censorship and the State

Historically, the State's relationship with the film industry has been an ambiguous one. Although there has been no official state censorship in this country, official concern over what was being shown in the cinema has always been present.⁵⁰ The position of the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) underlines this ambiguity. Although historians have seen the creation of the BBFC in 1912 as an act of self-interest devised by the film trade to ward off threats of state censorship, the BBFC's links with government have always been close.⁵¹ Cinema, a comparatively new leisure phenomenon, evolved in a free competitive market and flourished without undue state regulation. However, cinema had a questionable status compared to more established forms of culture, such as the theatre, art and literature. Like drinking it took a firm hold on working-class culture and thus aroused similar suspicions. Its critics saw it as primarily coarse entertainment for the masses. Furthermore, mirroring fears about public house culture, what was going on inside such places was not fully known. Regulation was needed to find out 'the facts'. As Kuhn points out, scientific inquiry into the cinema and its audience could produce knowledge and therefore mastery over the subject.⁵² To counter these concerns the film trade had

⁵⁰ See for example, Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, Cinema and the State, (1985), Julian Petley, 'Cinema and State', in All Our Yesterdays, Charles Barr (ed), (1986).

⁵¹ See, for example, R. Low, A History of British Film 1914-198, p. 126. A. Kuhn, Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality, pp. 14-21. J. Robertson, The Hidden Camera (1989), pp. 1-2.

⁵² A. Kuhn, Cinema, Censorship & Sexuality, p. 121.

to assume the mantle of 'respectability' and one such strategy was to accept some form of censorship without admitting the legitimacy of state interference in the business.

The British Board of Film Censors was formed in 1912 as the cinema began to attract increasing criticism.⁵³ Fearing that some form of centralised censorship was inevitable a deputation of film manufacturers and renters discussed the issue with the Home Secretary in February 1912. The BBFC was subsequently set up under the presidency of George Redford, who had previously been Examiner of Plays in the Lord Chamberlain's Office. However, the BBFC's decisions on the suitability of films were advisory, not mandatory. These could be accepted or rejected by local authorities, who, since the reform of local government in 1888, had powers of licensing places of entertainment. This did not change after the 1909 Cinematograph Act, which, although primarily concerned with safety conditions inside cinemas, also empowered authorities to determine the conditions under which licences were granted. Such conditions also included the suitability of films shown. So by the First World War, even though the creation of the BBFC was partly intended to achieve uniformity in censorship matters, local authorities still had the final say. In other words what was shown in Britain varied from region to region, depending on the views of local councils - a situation that still exists today. Some authorities accepted BBFC guidelines, others imposed their own judgements. For example, while most cinemas were showing the hugely popular *Ultus* series, Keswick council in Cumbria prosecuted the secretary of the Alhambra theatre, John Wilson, for showing 'an objectionable film full of scenes depicting robbery, murder and other crimes'. The defendant told the court that the film had been passed by the Censor and this was the first objection made to it. Wilson was fined £1 and magistrates 'wished it to be known that they disapproved of the opinion of people who thought there was a different standard of morality at picture palaces. People had said this was the usual

⁵³ The following history of the BBFC is based on much more fuller accounts in Low, History of British Film 1914-1918, Kuhn - Cinema, Censorship & Sexuality, and Robertson, The Hidden Camera.

sort of thing at picture palaces and they were very distressed to hear it.' ⁵⁴ Judging by these remarks, there seems to be a sizeable cultural gap between cinema-goers and the Keswick magistrates. The series was shown in other areas without such disapproval. By 1915 only 36 local authorities had accepted the Board's rulings on film classification out of a total of around 500, so voluntary censorship was by no means accepted by all areas.⁵⁵ In 1916 Herbert Samuel, who had played a leading role in getting the 1909 Cinematograph Act on the statute books, took over as Home Secretary. The Home Office sent out a memo to local authorities announcing the intention to impose a central censorship system. This was to be done by administrative action, not legislation. The proposed Board of Censors should have no association with the film trade. To add injury to insult it was suggested film makers could be charged a fee by the Board for examining films. In addition an Advisory Committee would be set up comprising local authority representatives, well known members of the public and famous authors not connected to the cinema. This move was denounced by the film trade as covert censorship. A frenzied letter from the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association (CEA) claimed state censorship would deprive CEA members of 75 per cent of films most popular with the public. It called for a campaign on the screen, in the press and through the law courts to counter such measures. 'Your very existence as an Exhibitor is at stake', warned the letter. The CEA also asked members to contribute towards a fighting fund. The Cinematograph Trade Council sent a letter to all MPs reminding them that the Home Secretary had no current legal powers to impose a central censorship scheme and called for the continuation of the BBFC for another year.⁵⁶ However, in November 1916 George Redford died and was replaced as BBFC president by the MP and journalist T.P. O'Connor, who was also president of the CEA. At the end of 1916 Samuel left the

⁵⁴ CJ, January 2, 1917.

⁵⁵ Kuhn, Cinema, Censorship & Sexuality, p. 23.

⁵⁶ PRO, HO 158/17, circular 264,149, May 16, 1916. HO 45/10811, October 3, & December 8, 1916.

Home Office with the change of government and central censorship plans were dropped.

The Home Office recommended that local authorities should make more stringent use of their powers under the 1909 Act and issued guidelines aimed at 'checking the exhibition of objectionable films'. These 'model conditions' advised that no films could be shown which were 'likely to be injurious to morality or to encourage or incite to crime, or lead to disorder, or be in any way offensive in the circumstances to public feeling or any which contains any offensive representations of living persons'. These conditions also applied to the exhibition of film posters.⁵⁷ Thus, despite all the wartime moves to solve the problems regarding a uniform regulation of films, local authorities still had the final say, albeit with advisory guidelines by the BBFC and the Home Office. These guidelines were sufficiently vague to be incapable of leading to uniform interpretation. A further problem for local authorities was that films may well have been shown in cinemas before any protests were received. Sometimes new films only arrived hours before their exhibition, giving watch committees little time to preview their content. However, as the Chief Constable of Leeds admitted, it was rare for objectionable films to be shown. If complaints were received the offending part was cut or a new film substituted. Leeds exhibitors also sent the police a printed programme of forthcoming performances.⁵⁸

While these debates on forms of censorship were continuing, the NCPM launched their inquiry into the cinema. In June 1916 the NCPM had published its findings on the declining birth rate after a three-year inquiry. The report found that wider practice and knowledge of birth control techniques was leading to a fall in birth rates among the middle and upper-classes. The working-class, however, was less liable to control their fertility.⁵⁹ The NCPM sponsored the British showing of the film *Where*

⁵⁷PRO, IIO 158/17, circular 312,397/128 -151& 206a, December 1916 and January 1917.

⁵⁸PR, Ibid, circ 312,397/191, letters from Chief Constable of Leeds, March 30 & April 7, 1917.

⁵⁹NCPM, National Birth Rate Commission, The Declining Birth Rate: Its Causes and Effects (1917).

Are My Children, which addressed the issues of abortion and birth control. However, as Kuhn notes, the film was never shown to a mass audience, but merely to selected, 'informed' audiences, thus keeping propaganda films outside the normal public sphere of cinema.⁶⁰ Clearly such films, it was believed, could only be appreciated by an educated audience, and education was the tool to produce a more elevating cinema. The NCPM comprised a body of religious, scientific and educational leaders, who were striving to take a constructive view of this new medium. It was well aware of the ability of the cinema to influence audiences, but was unwilling to be merely condemnatory, although there were deep concerns about what was being shown at cinemas. Cinema was 'a great invention with as yet unrealised possibilities for the healthy amusement and education of the people, which is influencing the lives of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of every city, town and hamlet in the United Kingdom: why should we stand aside, or merely denounce and alienate the men who run it, and only call upon the police to censor it?' The answer, therefore was to try and convince the film industry to produce films which would be more acceptable to middle-class opinion. The NCPM wanted 'a higher class programme, more suitable exhibitions for children, for the suppression of certain evils which had thrown themselves on the cinema halls as they had on other places, and which the war had accentuated'.⁶¹ In other words, wartime conditions, with significant social upheaval, had highlighted some of society's uncertainties about the country's youth and how they were being moulded for the future. Cinema, because it attracted an overwhelmingly working-class and often young, audience, was therefore a prominent concern for social reformers.

The NCPM Commission included The Lord Bishop of Birmingham, Sir Robert Baden-Powell and representatives from educational and religious organisations like the London County Council Education Committee, the Sunday School Union, the

⁶⁰ A. Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship & Sexuality*, pp. 38-47.

⁶¹ NCPM, *The Cinema*, pp. vi-vii, 1917.

Salvation Army, the National Union of Teachers, the YMCA and the Child Study Society. It also included the BBFC president, T.P. O'Connor and two representatives from the CEA. Marie Stopes, representing the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, was also a commission member. The Government, however, was suspicious of trade involvement with the inquiry. A Home Office memo alleged that the film trade had 'induced' the NCPM to set up the inquiry, presumably to forestall any government initiative on censorship. The Home Secretary declined to join the Commission because of fears that he might be bound by its findings. The inquiry was set up on the understanding that it would not interfere with any proposals for Home Office censorship, but these proposals had virtually been abandoned before the NCPM began its sittings.⁶² The Commission heard evidence from the film trade, educationalists, the police and the clergy, but very little from the actual audience. A handful of schoolchildren were interviewed but their evidence contains little insight into the cinema-going experience. One girl, no doubt influenced by adult concern over films causing eye strain, offered the opinion, presumably delivered with suitable solemnity: 'I don't go often as it is very injurious to my eyes'.

Kuhn is correct in her observation that age, rather than gender, composition made cinema a public sphere of regulation in Britain.⁶³ Medical concerns over eye strain among children led the Commission to recommend that more intervals of music or entertainment would relieve the problem. Front seats should be at least 20ft from the screen. Such concerns were voiced throughout the country. In Workington, Cumbria, for example, the Education Committee noted a drop in school attendance during 1915, offering the suggestions that late-night attendance at cinemas were tiring children out. Children who developed the cinema habit in early years were in danger of suffering eye trouble and were more likely to have to wear spectacles. School

⁶² PRO, HO 45/10811/312937/153, Home Office memo, January 15, 1917. NCPM, *The Cinema*, p. viii.

⁶³ A. Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship & Sexuality*, p. 122.

Showing such girls in luxurious surroundings and atmospheres of gaiety might be more of a lure to 'young girls of weak principles' than the overall message of the consequences of leading such lives. Any attempt to show vice in an attractive form was frowned upon. Censors also objected to depictions of women dressing up before 'going on the streets for immoral purposes'.⁶⁶ The underlying assumption here is that working-class girls with surplus cash to spend were more likely to be influenced by glamorous depictions of immorality. During this period wage-earning female munitions workers, with potentially more cash available to them for personal consumption, must surely have been deemed by social reformers and authorities to be particularly at risk.

According to the 1914 Report of the BBFC 6,881,614ft of film was inspected on 6,282 subjects: 5,886 were passed for 'U' exhibition and 416 were given 'A' certificates. Examiners took exception to 148 films, most of which were passed after cuts were made. Objections were raised to scenes of excessive violence, sacrilege, criminal behaviour, murder or suicide scenes, and incidents likely to cause panic in war. Other objections were of a sexual nature, including 'indecorous or ambiguous sub-titles, unnecessary exhibitions of feminine underclothing, vulgarity and impropriety, indecorous dancing, indelicate sexual situations, effects of hereditary diseases, and outrages on women'. Thirteen films were banned altogether, mostly because of their sexual content. These included instances of 'White Slave traffic, immorality, indelicate situations, delicate marital relations, salacious wit, scenes in disorderly houses and sensual exposition of eugenic doctrines'.⁶⁷ The following year had been one of 'great anxiety' to the Board, largely because of the increase of four to six-reel films dealing with 'stories based upon subjects connected with relations between the sexes, marital infidelity and triangular themes, some of which have been very daring in their conception'. The Board noticed that films using the plot and

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 105.

⁶⁷ Second Report of BBFC, quoted in Bioscope, February 25, 1915, pp. 705-6.

titles of 'books of a certain class' were increasing. It subsequently decided that any film with the same title as a 'questionable' book should not be passed. Even if the film was deemed to be innocuous the title would have to be changed. Fewer films were submitted in 1915: the BBFC passed 4,395 as 'U' and 372 as 'A' certificates. However, 214, a record number, were censored, while twenty-two were banned altogether. Those that were entirely rejected because of their sexual explicitness, comprised films portraying nudity, 'passionate love scenes', depictions of drug taking, seduction of girls, men and women in bed together, prostitution, incestuous relationships, and the effects of venereal disease. Other grounds for rejection were war-related, including those that portrayed 'scenes calculated to afford information to the enemy' and 'incidents tending to disparage our Allies'. BBFC reports for 1916-1918 were not issued because of paper shortages, but it seems that during the war the Board were increasingly aware of Government sensitivity to film makers' depiction of sexual relationships. The NCPM Commission noted that a stricter censorship did indeed now operate, but it expressed concern that more and more films were stimulating sexual desire in 'youths and maidens'; a recognition of the increasing attention paid by film-makers to such subjects. Additionally, the fact that many such films were American made control over them more difficult.⁶⁸

However, it was not only film content that was causing concern: what was happening inside the cinema also aroused fears of immoral behaviour. The cinema itself afforded a new ready-made venue for working-class courting couples, offering a degree of privacy unavailable elsewhere. The fact that intimacy was made more possible because of the darkness of the cinema made this an added attraction to couples, but a source of concern to others. On the one hand the cinema kept young men and women off the streets where 'moral perils' abounded. Film trade representatives were keen to depict cinema as a site of respectability which was a far

⁶⁸ NCPM, *The Cinema*, pp. xxx - xxxi.

superior alternative to 'idle lounging in the streets'.⁶⁹ On the other hand suspicions of sexuality in cinemas were rife at the time. Darkness encouraged indecency, while standing at the back afforded an opportunity for improper conduct, according to the NCPM. Witnesses to the NCPM inquiry offered varied opinions about what was going on at the cinema. An East London social worker said she had observed many cases of indecency, while Sir Robert Wallace, chairman of the London County Sessions, stated a number of cases had come before him. He believed the amount of actual offences would have been much higher, but many women were reluctant to come forward with such complaints. The Chief Constable of Edinburgh offered the opinion that 'darkness, combined with a low standard of morality of the individual' led to indecency. Others were more sceptical. The Commission heard that only two cases of indecency in a cinema had been brought to the notice of the London Branch of Exhibitors. A probation officer with 25 years experience had known only one such case of indecent assault in a cinema. Another claimed that indecency charges in open spaces were many times more numerous. F.R. Goodwin, the chairman of the London branch of the CEA, said that many indecency charges should never have been made. 'When investigation is made it is usually found that the alleged misconduct is nothing more than the privileged manifestation of affection between the sexes.'⁷⁰ This observation is surely relevant, even allowing for the partiality of the witness. There appears to have been a considerable cultural gap between what middle-class authorities and social reformers defined as acceptable behaviour and how working-class audiences actually behaved. This moral censure is evident in their concern both about film content and cinema attendance. The NCPM inquiry recommended that the solution to the 'moral danger of darkness' lay in better lighting in cinemas, thus making it easier for audiences to be monitored. Film trade officials opposed this recommendation, claiming that more lighting would spoil the picture and actually

⁶⁹ Ibid., statement of F.R. Goodwin, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. xxv-xxvii, ppxlv & 6.

make it easier for soliciting to take place. Kinematograph lampooned this idea by noting that while the authorities were busy darkening the streets, they were attempting to abolish darkness in the cinemas.⁷¹ Darkness was a suitable metaphor for 'not knowing': better lighting in the cinemas would enable responsible people to 'know' about what was going on, in the same way as launching an inquiry would shed light into what was 'known' about the cinema.

The 'Model' Cinema Experiment

Regulation of film content and behaviour in cinema, therefore, was a matter of concern to central and local government and social reformers. The BBFC, although a voluntary organisation, relied on central guidance, as did local authorities. The State kept a firm hold on cinema regulation without appearing to offer complete central control. The only way to achieve complete control was for a takeover of the industry itself, which would not have been either politically acceptable or possible, given the huge influence of the American film industry in Britain and general opposition to state intervention. However, the experiment of state-run cinema was attempted during the War. The Central Control Board not only ran public houses in the Carlisle and Gretna area, but also offered cinema facilities. Unsurprisingly, the film industry, battling at this time to escape further central direction, were furious at such a move. CEA official F.R. Goodwin, in his evidence to the NCPM Commission, emphasised cinema audiences were helping the war effort by drinking less and keeping off the streets. He noted that the Government themselves 'has shown a very practical recognition of this fact by installing a cinematograph in some of their latest houses'.⁷² Goodwin was being disingenuous, of course. When the Central Control Board began offering cinema facilities to munitions workers in 1916 the film industry erupted in fury. A front page editorial in *Bioscope* in August 1916 proclaimed 'No Room for

⁷¹ Kinematograph, November 23, 1916, p. 2.

⁷² NCPM, The Cinema, p6.

State Cinemas' as it announced that the CCB was opening a cinema along with a refurbished 'model' tavern, 'The Globe' in Longtown, north of Carlisle, the most westerly point of the Gretna explosives factory. Why was the CCB doing this? it asked. If it was attempting to lure people away from the public house, then this was a process which the film trade already carried out 'without being clapped into a Civil Service strait waistcoat'. Furthermore if the film trade was helping to reduce wartime drinking, why should the Government attempt to reduce the cinema industry's profits?: 'He is an expensive type of flatterer who pats you on the back with one hand whilst going through your pockets with the other'. If cinema-going helped reduce alcohol consumption, the film trade was quick to point out the CCB were attempting the exact opposite by selling both drink and cinema tickets at the same location. Moreover, if the Government was attempting to demonstrate its broad-minded tolerance towards 'healthy amusement' of the people, it was a role that the industry itself was more than capable of achieving. The cinema was not an industry, but 'an art' and 'cannot be run on the rule of thumb lines that it is possible to apply to the railways, the postal service and even the public houses'. This state initiative, introduced when central censorship plans were being seriously considered, clearly worried the film trade. It was a precedent that, once established, could have profound repercussions in peacetime. The suspicion was that the Government, in the pretext of wartime emergency measures, was attempting to by-pass legislation and present it as a fait accompli. The editorial ended by warning: 'In these restless and busy times, the crank has many an opportunity for decisive action which would be denied to him in the more leisurely days of peace'.⁷³

Nevertheless, the CCB continued with its plans and opened another cinema capable of holding 300-400 people at Gracie's Bankings in Annan, alongside the refurbished Annan Tavern in November 1916. Next to the cinema was a tea-room and other facilities included a bowling green and a savings bank. Musical events, including an

⁷³ Bioscope, August 10, 1916.

orchestra performing three times a week, were also provided. Thus the cinema could be incorporated into the boundaries of 'respectable' leisure. Such facilities were praised by the Liberal-leaning Carlisle Journal as providing 'refreshment for mind and body'. Others were less convinced of the wisdom of such attractions. A petition was sent to the CCB 'from every minister in Annan, every doctor, magistrate, solicitor, bank agent, all accessible JPs, every member of the School Board except one, and a dozen leading employees in the town', protesting that such facilities were 'a danger to youth'.⁷⁴ This does not seem to have prevented young cinema-goers from using the facilities extensively. Thus by mid-1917 state-run cinemas were established, not only at Annan and Longtown, but also in the townships of Gretna and Eastriggs, primarily for munitions workers. Gretna's cinema, which was also used for dances, could hold an audience of 700, while Carlyle Hall in Eastriggs held around 300. When the latter opened, in April 1917, it immediately played to a full house.⁷⁵

How did the state justify its provision of cinemas for the munitions workers? Firstly there seems to have been a sensitivity on the part of the Ministry of Munitions to accusations levelled at its involvement in leisure provision. Ernest Taylor, the manager of the factory's Social and Recreational Department, was at pains to try and keep a distance between central involvement and the cinemas in Gretna and Eastriggs. In his official report on recreational activities he denied that the cinemas were run by the Ministry of Munitions. Although the buildings were erected by the Ministry, these were then let out to the factory's Social and Athletic Association. The Association's Social Manager was regarded as the tenant of the cinemas. In turn the Social Manager ran the cinemas on behalf of the Recreation Committee. He was in charge of the administration of the cinema business, but also, significantly, was responsible for the selection of films. This he appears to have done with some consideration. Because the cinema audience was primarily young munitions workers,

⁷⁴ CJ, July 4 and November 14, 1916.

⁷⁵ AO, October 6, 1916 & CJ, April 24, 1917. DA, Dornock Souvenir Magazine, 1919.

great care was involved in the selection of films. 'The Committee, having regard to *the exceptional nature of the audience*, (my italics) . . . expressly stipulated that every precaution should be taken to avoid pictures in which the sex problem might be unduly involved'.⁷⁶ This seems to suggest that what was shown at the state cinemas may have been more selective than what was exhibited at commercial cinemas in Carlisle and Annan. Suspicion about the sexual content of film was clearly a source of concern to those in authority locally.. The Chief Constable of Dumfries, for example, thought the subject of many films was 'merely a string of compromising situations and suggestions of immorality.' Cinema audiences, on the other hand, found such topics an irresistible draw. When one film in the Dumfries area arrived with the advance publicity that no-one under sixteen would be admitted, the first night was a sell-out and hundreds were turned away.⁷⁷ Significantly, the first film shown at the opening of Gracie's Banking cinema at Annan, was not a film dealing with such topics, but *The Battle of the Somme*, an immensely popular film, nevertheless, with audiences throughout Britain.⁷⁸ It was doubtless this type of film, educative and dramatic, and designed to raise morale on the home front, which state-run cinemas would be more likely to exhibit. More sensationalist films, even when passed by the BBFC, were liable to come under closer scrutiny. The Gretna factory Recreation Committee, therefore, acted in a similar fashion to a local authority watch committee. In Scotland, however, concerns had been raised that local authorities, unlike their English counterparts, had so far not used the 1909 Cinematograph Act to censor film content.⁷⁹ So the Recreation Committee appear to have been an extra layer of censorship in the Gretna area. The Committee, in addition, solely comprised Ministry and factory officials. These were the Town Manager, two Assistant

⁷⁶ Imperial War Museum, Women's Work Collection, Mun 14/10, HM Factory Gretna: Report of Social & Recreation Dept, p. 6.

⁷⁷ NCPM, *The Cinema*, written evidence submitted by the Chief Constable of Dumfries, p. 333.

⁷⁸ See August 1916 editions of *Bioscope*, which report the film playing to packed audiences on its release. *Bioscope*, November, 16, 1916, p. 710.

⁷⁹ PRO, HO 45/10811/312387/85, Scottish Office letter to Home Office, November 11, 1916 & HO 45/10811/312397/151, Home Office letter to A.E. Newbould, January 1917.

Superintendents, the Managers of the Dornock and Mossband areas, the Acids Section Manager, the Social Manager and the Lady Welfare Superintendent.⁸⁰

Entrance prices appear to have been similar to those at commercial cinemas and films were changed twice a week. Rentals of £780 a year were paid to the Ministry and during the first year of operation over £1000 was paid in Entertainment Tax. Involvement in the cinema industry enabled the Social and Athletic Association to make a large profit and, importantly, to 'relieve the Ministry of many expenses for which it became responsible under the Recreation scheme'.⁸¹ Thus surplus cash appears to have been ploughed back into organising other recreational activities at Gretna. Taylor was obviously keen to stress the economic efficiency of such a scheme: the Treasury had stipulated that it should be self-supporting. The fact that it was so also indicates that munitions workers at Gretna must have used the cinema in great numbers.

The state/factory cinemas at Gretna and Eastriggs and the CCB-run cinemas at Annan and Longtown all had one thing in common: architecturally they looked completely different from the free enterprise cinemas. While the latter offered a taste of exotica and luxury, the former were plain in appearance. In that respect they had much in common with the State-run public houses: no garish exteriors with gaudy advertisements, while internally there was little evidence of exotic trappings. At Gretna and Eastriggs the cinemas were placed in the middle of a terrace of shops built of the same materials, thus further adding to their comparative anonymity. The intention was to provide sober and sensible recreation which was also well-regulated, mirroring the approach of the CCB public houses. The vulgarity of commercial cinemas was to be discarded in the same way as was the brashness of commercial brewers. Nevertheless, these cinemas were immensely popular: this perhaps says as much about working-class appetite for cinema-going as approval of state-run cinemas.

⁸⁰ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p. 2.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 6.

Ultimately, this state experiment added to the choice for munitions workers. Factory workers did not go solely to the state-run cinemas. Locally-based workers went there during the week, but also headed for the more lavish style of cinemas in Annan and Carlisle at weekends and on days off where facilities were more luxurious. Gretna's Central Hall cinema had no tip-up seats and, although often full, seems to have attracted 'the rougher type of workman'. A welfare official admitted that 'most of the others are discontented and are going to Annan'. Eastriggs Institute, also, could not compete with facilities at commercial cinemas. It had one major drawback in that it had no sloping floor. Ministry officials proposed plans to update facilities in order to win back audiences from other cinemas.⁸²

Conclusion

Young female munitions workers were often avid cinema-goers. Contemporaries quickly noticed that wherever munitions factories were based, attendances at cinemas rocketed. While other areas, such as the mining districts of the North-East, were recording a fall-off in attendance, cinemas in areas such as Gretna and Carlisle, Barrow and Sheffield were playing to packed houses. Female munitions workers, in particular, with potentially surplus cash available, had greater access to the cinema, not least when the State became involved in offering such facilities in the Gretna area. Furthermore, as film content increasingly paid attention to sex relationships and social mobility, and the film industry targeted its product on young, fashion-conscious girls, it was a world that seemed relevant to their concerns and one which openly attempted to include women within its boundaries. It also gave them access to a wider world, beyond the traditional confines of home, domestic duties and strictly enforced gender roles. Additionally, the cinema environment offered a taste of exotica and luxury and also offered a site for mixed-sex companionship, away from parental control.

⁸² PRO, Mun 7/257, letter to Director of Welfare. July 25, 1918.

However, because working-class women and young people were seen to be attending cinema in such significant numbers during the War, the issue of regulation and control seemed increasingly to become a prominent issue for central and local government, educationalists and religious bodies. Age, gender and class considerations appear to have been uppermost in their minds. Both film content and the cinema environment were subject to increasing regulation in this period. It is noticeable that the cinema in wartime was being scrutinised in the same way that the workplace had been subjected to inquiry when women and children entered the factory system from the 19th century. As the NCPM inquiry shows, concern over conditions in cinemas; lighting, hours of attendance, effects on the body, the moral dangers of young boys and girls in the same environment, all bear a striking similarity to concerns about wartime factory conditions. Paradoxically, while regulations relating to hours of work inside factories were being eased in the interests of wartime production, the concern over women and children's leisure hours was being increased outside the factory. 'The exceptional nature of the audience', as the Gretna factory Social manager observed, made it imperative for the State to monitor closely what munitions workers viewed on the screen.⁸³ The cinema, however, was just one of a plethora of leisure schemes provided by factory officials at Gretna under the regulation of the Social and Athletic Association. How and why these operated is the subject of the next chapter.

⁸³ IWM, Mun 14/10, p. 6.

Chapter 6

Women and Factory-based Recreation

The Rationale for Factory-organised Recreation

The state provision of leisure was an important component of factory life at Gretna. It was designed to attract workers, engage them in 'useful' recreational pursuits and divert them away from rival commercial outlets. The provision of recreation, however, in the sombre atmosphere of war, was always likely to cause comment and criticism, especially when it upset local sensibilities. The public visibility of young workers outside the factory, for example, upset the Rev. W.S. Peebles, a Scottish Presbyterian minister at Annan. He complained of excessive Sunday working at the Gretna factory and of the provision of Sunday dances for munitions workers. 'Our quiet streets are now disturbed on Sunday evenings by motor transports rattling through the streets crowded with workers singing Harry Lauder songs and ragtime melodies'. The normally quiet streets of Annan were being made noisy by teenage boys and girls. What particularly seems to have upset him is that these dances were being provided by the Ministry of Munitions.¹ In one sense, of course, the Rev Peebles was disturbed at the secularisation of the Sabbath, an important concern for south-west Scotland where religious sensibilities were strong. In the pre-war Gretna and Annan area Sunday commercial entertainment, in the form of drinking, cinema-going or dancing was not an alternative to church -organised functions. Suddenly, the state was taking on the role of a provider of entertainment, a rival to the attractions of the Church. If private commercial concerns were forbidden by law to offer Sunday

¹ Report of United Free Presbyterian meeting, AQ, February 16, 1917.

entertainment, then why should the state suddenly sweep aside such barriers and offer these facilities itself? It was a question that had been asked by the breweries and the cinema industry, as the two previous chapters have shown. In the Rev. Peebles' argument, however, there is also a suggestion that this is state-sponsored frivolity: inappropriate provision for a Sunday, and doubly so during wartime. Here were young boys and girls behaving in a very publicly visible way and making 'noise', which was always a criterion for respectable or non-respectable public behaviour. Furthermore, the entertainment on offer was being provided for females as well as males. Here the question of accepted culturally-defined gender roles was being forced into the open. Female workers at the factory not only had a greater opportunity to drink, go to the cinema and attend dances, but also to participate in sport. This chapter will analyse the provision of recreation and pay particular attention to the role of women's football as a wartime phenomenon. It will also attempt an analysis of why it was thought necessary to provide such recreation and investigate responses to this provision.

In the Gretna factory, provision of social and recreational activities was taken extremely seriously. Gretna had its own Social and Recreational Department, separate from the Welfare Department, unlike most munitions factories. While housing, feeding, and the general supervision of female workers inside and outside the workplace was administered by the Welfare Department, the Social and Recreation Department supervised 'all amusements and recreation facilities'. These facilities were comprehensive. What was offered ranged from public dances, films, 'improvement' classes, music societies and a wide range of sports activities. The department quickly developed its own fiefdom within the factory, employing its own office staff, supervisors, caretakers, musicians, groundstaff, attendants and cleaners.² Angela Woollacott notes that recreational activities for munitions workers varied with location. Women in large urban centres had greater access to cinemas, mass transport systems and parks, while those in remoter places, such as Gretna, relied on factory-

² IWM, Women's Work Collection, Mun 14/10, HM Factory, Gretna: Report of the Social and Recreation Department, p. 1.

based activities.³ This may be generally true, but in the specific example of Gretna it overlooks the fact that the proximity of Carlisle did make it accessible to munitions workers. It would be more accurate to assert that Gretna workers enjoyed *both* sets of facilities, the commercial outlets of Carlisle and the factory-based activities. The evidence in Chapters 4 and 5 certainly suggests that cafes, pubs, theatres and cinemas in Carlisle attracted a great number of Gretna workers. This was partly because some of them lived or lodged in Carlisle, but also it was an option for those on days off. Mrs. E.N. Smith, although living in a Gretna hostel, regularly went into Carlisle on Saturdays after finishing her night shift.⁴ This was likely to have been a common occurrence especially for workers who needed a break from the routine of life in the Gretna township. Indeed, it is offered as one reason why factory officials took recreation provision so seriously. In his departmental report, the Social Manager, Ernest Taylor, is quite frank about this aspect. The department was set up to attempt to stem the tide of a quite significant proportion of female workers who only stayed at the factory for a short time. Staff turnover at the factory was a serious problem.⁵ In other words, production needs were paramount when it came to justification of recreational activities. Because so many workers were unwilling to work at the factory for a long period, a special inquiry was held to determine the reason. Factory officials concluded that, initially, 'the absence of any regular means of recreation for either men or women in their leisure hours' was the principal explanation.⁶ But Taylor's further justification for factory provision of leisure sheds greater light on what was also concerning officials. Workers were heading to Carlisle for alcohol, sensationalised films and greater opportunity for inter-sex socialising. The attractions of leisure exacerbated bad timekeeping, industrial inefficiency and the loosening of

³ A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 136.

⁴ Liddle Archive, Item 23, Tape 167, interview with Mrs. E.N. Smith.

⁵ See Chapter 2.

⁶ IWM, Women's Work Collection, Mun 14/10, p. 1.

moral standards. The answer was to provide more closely supervised leisure and make it more difficult to gain access to other entertainment outlets. Taylor noted in his report: ' With the object of keeping the workers within the Factory area, and away from undesirable temptations elsewhere, no late ordinary trains were run between Gretna and Carlisle, except on Saturdays, when the latest train left the neighbouring city at 9.30pm'. Thus, 'having regard to the pressing need for labour,' the Ministry of Munitions gave the go-ahead to provide extensive recreation facilities.⁷

Dancing

Socialising at dances was also an important outlet for females, and, as they did in the cinema, munitions workers flocked to factory socials. Ernest Taylor noted that it was an entertainment 'of which the workers, and especially the girls, never tire'. In fact, hundreds of dances were put on by the factory and their popularity remained undiminished. Different departments in the factory, sports clubs, trade unions and military bodies all arranged dances at Gretna Institute, the Border Hall and the Institute at Eastriggs.⁸ Suspicions of encouraging frivolity during wartime, such as those of the Rev W.S. Peebles, could be countered by the fact that proceeds, often amounting to significant sums, were donated to war charities or the Factory Benevolent Fund.⁹ As well as occasional dances promoted by different works organisations, regular events were also held. Every Thursday evening 'free' dances were held at the Border Hall, Gretna and at Eastriggs Central Hall. These, in fact, were free to subscribing members of the Social and Athletic Association: it cost one shilling a month to become a member. Non-members could still attend, with females being charged 4d and males 6d. These events proved so popular that some girls on night-shift opted to stay on at the dances until their close at 10pm and missed their

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p. 8.

⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

trains to take them to work. This must have been a regular occurrence as these dances were later ended at 9pm, by order of the Recreation Committee. This was not a popular decision and the official report on social activities notes that 'there was a certain amount of disappointment' at the order.

'Socials' were also held on Wednesday evenings for workers who subscribed to the Social and Athletic Association. Females could invite male friends, 'which they greatly appreciate'. A 'Mixed Club', for male and female members also operated regularly throughout the week. Dances were also held on Saturday evenings, from 7.30-10.30pm at both Gretna and Eastriggs. Originally, the dances went on until 11.30pm, but this was discontinued under a regulation in the Defence of the Realm Act. But the dances still remained extremely popular, particularly with the younger girls. The decision to hold Saturday night dances appears to have been taken because many teenage girls were going into Carlisle or Dumfries on weekend nights in search of entertainments. What these teenagers were doing fuelled fears of a wartime relaxation of moral standards. Outside the factory they were much more difficult to supervise. Ernest Taylor's report admitted as much when he wrote: 'It had become evident that there was a growing tendency on the part of some of the younger workers to spend their Saturday evenings outside the Factory area amidst surroundings that were not altogether desirable and where they were no longer subject to the kindly supervision and restraining influence of the Welfare Department. It was felt to be much better to, if possible, keep them amused "at home"'.¹⁰

Fancy dress dances were also held, with prizes for the most ingenious costumes. These were often put on at holiday times; over the Christmas period in 1917 eleven dances were held in the space of five evenings.¹¹ A St Patrick's Day dance, which was 'well attended', was held in March 1917 at the Border Hall, Gretna.¹² Four dances

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² CJ, March 27, 1917.

were arranged for those who worked over the August Bank Holiday of 1917. One dance drew around 300 girls and also a contingent of Canadian soldiers, who were working in South-West Scotland in the timber industry. Such dances must surely have been a magnet for local males and soldiers stationed in the area. It was a ready made opportunity for socialising between the sexes that appears to have been enthusiastically taken up. Ernest Taylor's official report was keen to stress the respectability of such events. He noted that, due to the shortage of men, many of the girls partnered each other and were 'beautiful dancers,' displaying 'buoyancy and enthusiasm'.¹³ The Rev. Peebles' complaints of noisy munitions workers singing on their way home from such dances also suggest that having a good time was far more a priority than observing a sense of decorum. Geoffrey Higson, a Royal Engineers chemist who worked at Gretna, noted in his diary that one dance he attended was 'good, but rowdy'. A fancy dress dance in 1918 was 'crowded', but nevertheless he 'enjoyed it immensely'.¹⁴ The popularity of dances for young, single girls and boys was not new, of course. But at Gretna, their regularity and official sanction, because they were organised by factory officials and employees, made them an important aspect of social life in the area. This is hardly surprising. Kathy Peiss has noted that dances provided a greater opportunity for meeting a wider social cross section of male partners, a chance to display more uninhibited behaviour by adopting the new dance styles with more bodily movement, or by simply behaving in a less formal way, for example, by smoking or talking loudly. Dances, in effect, were a social space for girls 'enhancing and legitimating their participation in a public social life'.¹⁵ Peiss's comments could equally apply to the dance-crazy Gretna female munitions workers.

The popularity of dancing was not only recognised by the Ministry of Munitions and factory officials. Although the provision of such entertainment was impressive enough by itself, voluntary organisations working in the area also found this an ideal

¹³ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p. 8.

¹⁴ University of Leeds, Liddle Archive, Ref 19, Diary of Geoffrey Higson. Entries for August 10, 1917 & Sept 30, 1918.

¹⁵ K. Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, pp. 88 & 100-3.

way to attract girls into their milieu. Girls clubs, the YWCA and other reform-minded bodies offered such facilities. The Federation of Working Girls' Clubs, for example, offered facilities for young working-class females from the late nineteenth century. To attract such people, however, was not always easy. Girls' clubs could offer instruction in sewing, millinery, gymnastics and 'improving' lectures, but unless dancing was also on the agenda their chances of success were slim.¹⁶ Maud Stanley, writing about Girls Clubs in 1890, argued that forming such organisations would improve girls, make them more responsible and subsequently improve the working-class as a whole, by influencing sweethearts, fathers and sons.¹⁷ This use of females in an effort to 'civilise' the male working-class has echoes in the work of the Central Control Board and public house facilities during the War.

Adolescent girls, once having left school and starting to earn wages, were seen as particularly prone to becoming too independent. Lily Montague, in an article published in 1904, wrote: 'As soon as the discipline of school is removed and the process of wage earning begins, girls are most seriously in need of training and protection. Their precocious self-development in itself menaces their proper development.'¹⁸ Factory girls earning a regular wage were particularly vulnerable because they had, theoretically, the economic power to spend on fashions and commercialised leisure. Factory life also could bring them into contact with 'the wrong sort' and lead to 'ill-considered liaisons'.¹⁹ Of course, 'the wrong sort' could also be encountered at dances, but held in the right environment and with adequate supervision, dances could be transformed into something more civilised.

In January 1917 a Girls Club was opened in Carlisle and targeted young munitions workers living or lodging in the city. It was organised by the Munitions Welfare

¹⁶ M. Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work & Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, 1985, p. 232.

¹⁷ M. Stanley, *Clubs for Working Girls*, 1890, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ L. Montague, 'The Girl in the Background,' in E.J. Urwick (ed), *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities* (1904), p246, cited in C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian & Edwardian England* (1981), p. 105.

¹⁹ J. Shelley, 'From Home Life to Industrial Life,' in J.J. Findlay (ed), *The Young Wage Earner* (1918), cited in Dyhouse, p. 105.

Committee of the YWCA for over 16s, with a subscription of 2d a week. The club was open every evening and a mixed social was held once a week. The club provided a library and also organised games, drill, singing, Bible and cookery lessons.²⁰ Girls under 16 could attend the singing classes but were not allowed into the dances. On the committee were two prominent National Union of Women Workers local officials, Miss Creighton and Hetty Donald, both heavily involved in organising women police patrols in the area, following concern about the public behaviour of young girls in the city.²¹ Non-members could attend the dances, but had to have an invitation card from a member. Presumably this was primarily intended to exclude any unattached males who could not be vouched for by a member. By the end of January around 500 members had joined, mainly factory or munitions workers. Providing dance facilities must have been the main attraction, rather than the drill, Bible and cookery lessons on offer. This may well have been seen as a good way of supervising teenage working girls who lived locally and were out of reach of the Welfare Department at Gretna.

The YWCA also opened a hut for women workers at Gretna, comprising a large recreation hall and living apartments. The Hon. Emily Kinnaird said she hoped 'girls of education' would rally round and 'help the industrial girls by their association with them'.²² The Salvation Army, too, opened a hut in Gretna and the YWCA extended their influence to Annan where a hut was opened with a recreation room, a concert hall, and a rest room for 'homesick girls'. The YMCA opened a hut for male workers at Eastriggs soon after.²³ Another Girls Club was formed at Longtown, north of the city and close to the most westerly point of the Gretna complex in December 1917. Ninety girls were present at its opening.²⁴ Other attempts at organising both young

²⁰ CJ, January 12, 1917.

²¹ See Chapter 7.

²² CJ, April 3 and April 13, 1917.

²³ AO, April 13, and CJ, July 20, 1917.

²⁴ CJ, January 27 and December 14, 1917.

workers and older females did not fare so well. Probably the more informal the club and the less proselytising surrounding it, the greater was the chance of success. A concert in the area designed to interest munitions workers living in lodgings in 'good music and to counteract the attractions of the street,' was not successful, 'a mere handful' bothering to attend.²⁵ Uplifting entertainment was often marred in the eyes of organisers by working-class females who declined to be 'improved', particularly when other options were open to them. The League of Honour had opened a Union Jack Club for women in Botchergate, a working-class district just south of the city centre, but it had been 'a dead failure.' Mrs Scott-Steel told the annual meeting of the local British Women's Temperance Society that officials were exasperated as to what to do with 'those poor people who were flying to drink in their time of trouble and prosperity' The phrase 'trouble and prosperity', is illuminating. Here was a discourse that offered the image of working-class women weighed down by the burden of war, but who were also now wage-earners in their own right. Their grief was believed to be driving them to drink and they now had the economic means to do so. It was a discourse repeated throughout the war and offered as a justification for the organisation of women's lives, both inside and outside the workplace.

'Keep Them Off the Street'

This chapter has already analysed the reasons for such a comprehensive provision of recreation in the Gretna area during the War - the need to maintain industrial efficiency for production purposes and to channel workers' leisure time into 'healthy' amusements. The provision of recreation could also be justified as a sensible way of reducing wartime tensions and maintaining social cohesion. Ministry of Munitions officials attributed industrial unrest and public disorder in the Barrow munitions area to a lack of such provision. 'Clubs were needed for the health and happiness of the workers and to keep them off the streets.' Firms which produced munitions got tax

²⁵ CJ, December 18, 1917.

relief on contributions towards recreation schemes, while National Factories received a Treasury grant.²⁶ Recreation provision made sense in the interests of 'morality and public order'. Gretna engineering manager David Gilmour thought welfare schemes for women were 'necessary for efficiency purposes'.²⁷ Thus providing dances for munitions workers could be justified in economic and in moral terms.

Gretna's Social and Recreation Department went far further than supplying their own style of commercialised entertainment. Instructional classes, lectures, musical societies and sports provision were abundant. The respective Institutes at Gretna and Eastriggs were the focal points of the scheme. Gretna Institute was a two-storey brick building which was sexually segregated for recreation provision: the ground floor was reserved for males and the upper floor for females. The men's room, 'of considerable dimension and smartly furnished', was used for reading, writing and games. Newspapers, magazines and journals were provided and there were also facilities for playing draughts, dominoes, chess and other games. The female section also had a reading room with papers and magazines provided. There was also a lounge equipped with sewing machines to reinforce the idea that female leisure was equated with domestic duties. The games room featured a piano and gramophone. A room was also provided for instruction in dancing, singing, needlework and embroidery, art, elocution, first aid, citizenship and hairdressing. These classes were often taken by 'professional instructresses engaged by the Recreation Committee', or by volunteer 'ladies.' On Sunday evenings hymn singing was held, followed by a 'practical, homely address'.²⁸ Unfortunately, it is impossible to discover how frequently attended these instructional classes were. However, Ernest Taylor's report suggests that for many girls a less informal social atmosphere was likely to prove more popular. The Social and Recreation Department's Girls Club 'always commanded a very large share of

²⁶ IWM, WW, Mun 18/9/7, Welfare & Health Section: Welfare Outside the Factory.

²⁷ IWM, WWC, Mun 18/912, Report of Welfare Conference at Oxford, August 6-9, 1918. PRO, Lab 5/1, L15, evidence of David Gilmour to Committee on Women in Industry, 1918.

²⁸ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p. 3.

support and popularity', particularly on dance nights. The club met in a wooden building in surroundings that were 'less pretentious than the Institute'. It was a social space that must have felt far less stifling than the sombre and serious Institute. Taylor's report noted: ' . . . because of the free-and-easy atmosphere, it has appealed more warmly to many of the girls. They have evidently felt that it has afforded them a greater sense of freedom. The Club has consequently served a most useful purpose in making provision for those girls who obviously have preferred to avoid anything more ambitious.' It suggests that there were a significant number of female workers who were resistant to 'improving recreation' attempts, but whose leisure time could at least be organised under the watchful eyes of the Recreation Department. Containing exuberance to a certain degree justified the Girls Club existence, or, as Taylor put it: 'The behaviour of the girls has been exceedingly good, and only upon very rare occasions has the Lady-in-charge had any cause for complaint.' ²⁹

Girls clubs at Ministry of Munitions factories, although supervised by welfare or recreation officers, were often managed on a daily basis by a committee of girls who could decide on furniture and decorations. There were invariably facilities for washing and mending clothes and girls from the same shift could join together to organise their own events. It gave them some degree of autonomy and sense of responsibility. This seems to have been appreciated by the workforce and heavily utilised. A Ministry of Munitions welfare report noted that at such clubs 'there is practically no supervision as it is understood that all members are responsible persons'. ³⁰

A variety of rational recreation schemes were launched by the Social Department, but these appear to have had far less impact on female munitions workers. A Choral and Operatic Society reached quite a high standard, enabling them to put on such productions as 'HMS Pinafore' and 'The Gondoliers', with around 70 performers. The

²⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁰ IWM, WWC, Mun 18/9/7, Ministry of Munitions Welfare and Health Section: Welfare Work Outside the Factory.

Choral section gave Sunday concerts of works such as Handel's 'Messiah'. However, working-class involvement appears to have been muted. The majority of performers were salaried members of staff, although operatives 'were given every encouragement to join'. Some workers did join, but not in great numbers. More female workers appear to have been involved in the Dramatic Society. The Recreation Committee engaged a professional actress and 'a considerable number of girl operatives' went along to classes. Some joined to become more proficient at entertaining friends in less informal social situations. Taylor observed that some girls 'occasionally made satisfactory appearances on the public stage, whilst others were content to display their abilities at entertainments given in Hostels'. Dramatic classes were also held at Gretna Institute and were 'an undoubted success'.³¹ Some working-class girls appear to have taken advantage of such provision to adapt them to their own needs, rather than join in more official productions dominated by middle-class employees in a formal atmosphere.

Lectures 'of an instructive and informative description' were held on weekday nights but these could not compete with rival dance functions at Gretna. Mr Taylor observed that: 'experience has shown that on week-days at any rate the workers prefer some lighter form of recreation'. Sunday lectures, timed so as not to clash with church services, were more popular and The Recreation Department brought in a diverse group of guest speakers, from Canon Parfit of Jerusalem to the Labour MP and dockers leader Ben Tillett. The Horticultural Society attracted numerous members, although Taylor does not mention any female involvement, while the Scientific Society provided lectures on 'technical subjects' for members of staff who were provided with a reference library and research facilities. Similarly, the Literary and Debating Society provided an outlet for 'prominent officials of the factory' to address the audience on financial, medical and labour issues.³²

³¹ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, pp. 6-7.

³² Ibid., pp. 7-8.

The Provision of Sport

Richard Holt has observed that sport in modern Britain has been a particularly successful means of creating male sociability and a masculine identity. Sport was not only a means of keeping fit, but for 'making friends, building communities and sharing experiences.' Sport helped create male identities and helped distance them from a perceived feminine world of dependency, physical frailty and passiveness. The sporting world was, therefore, where women were largely invisible or confined to the margins as spectators or subservient participants, serving teas or organising social events.³³ Similarly, J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park assert that nineteenth and twentieth century sport was a major vehicle for defining and reinforcing gender differences, particularly among the middle and upper-classes.³⁴

Sport, however, also reflects tensions in society and can challenge ideas underpinning existing social arrangements. The physical aspect emphasised the importance of the body. Women's involvement in sport, therefore, was capable of questioning existing definitions of physicality. Female participation in sport, from the nineteenth century, undermined Victorian ideas of femininity.³⁵ Historians of women's sports activity have drawn such conclusions from the increased involvement of middle and upper-class women. McCrone, for example, sees women's entry into sport directly related to the campaign for female higher education from the 1860s onwards. The introduction of sport for women at colleges such as Girton and Newnham, and Lady Margaret and Somerville Halls, at Oxford, enabled participation in hockey, lacrosse, swimming and gymnastics. Other sports, such as football and cricket, were deemed to be still too 'masculine' for female participation. The wisdom

³³ R. Holt, Sport and the British: A Modern History (1989) (1995 pb edn), pp. 347-8.

³⁴ J.A. Mangan & Roberta Park (eds), From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras (1987), pp. 3-4.

³⁵ Kathleen McCrone, Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women 1870-1914 (1988), pp. 1-5. Jennifer Hargreaves, 'Victorian Familism and the Formative Years of Female Sport', in Mangan and Park, From Fair Sex to Feminism, p. 130.

of encouraging women's sport was largely centred around two competing ideologies. On the one hand athletic prowess was undignified for women of a certain social status. Females who displayed 'inappropriate' behaviour, such as aggression and competitiveness were imperfectly developed and likely to pass on these characteristics to their children. On the other hand, games made women healthier and made them better prepared for academic exercise and motherhood. Thus, as McCrone points out, arguments not only against, but for women's sport, revolved around ideas of domesticity rather than for feminist reasons.³⁶ Colleges that enabled middle and upper-class women to play sport also opened up a new career choice for women. Physical education was already a part of the curriculum in girls' schools by 1914. Elementary schools had introduced gymnastics from the 1870s, while organisations such as the National Association of Working Girls Clubs, the Girl Guides and the YWCA had also begun to offer sports provision.³⁷ The Chelsea College for Physical Education, founded by Dorette Wilke in 1898, aimed at making physical education a respectable female profession. Its emphasis on a 'scientific' approach to the body underlined its legitimacy to be taken seriously and could be seen as a valid response to the drive for national efficiency before World War I.³⁸

The War also provided opportunities for middle-class women trained in physical education. Gretna's Social and Recreation Department employed a trained instructress to run a gymnastics club 'for girl operatives'. Classes were held several times a week in the Border Hall, Gretna. Uniforms 'that afford them ample freedom for their numerous exercises' were provided. These were initially paid for by the Recreation Committee, but club members then paid for them 'in easy instalments'. The results of such a scheme were 'most gratifying and beneficial, physically and otherwise'.³⁹ Thus,

³⁶ K. McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women*, pp. 7-8, 27-48, 88-103.

³⁷ N. Tranter, *Sport, Economy & Society in Britain 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 79-81.

³⁸ K. McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women*, pp. 101-3. R. Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 118.

³⁹ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p. 5.

such schemes provided rational recreation for female workers while preparing them physically for the demanding work at munitions factories. This acceptable face of physical recreation was thought worthy of bringing to the King's attention when he visited Gretna in 1917. The gymnastics club put on a special performance for the Royal visit.⁴⁰ The club also had a separate section for male employees, although the provision appears to have been predominantly for female workers.

Thus, from the end of the nineteenth century there was an increase among middle and upper-class women in sports participation. It evolved from a casual, recreational form into a more institutionalised structure with clubs and governing bodies and becoming more competitive and physical. McCrone cites the introduction of women's hockey clubs from the late 1880s and the formation of the Ladies Hockey Association in 1895 as a significant development, with the formulation of rules and the arranging of fixtures.⁴¹ Clubs like these would be unlikely to encourage working-class participation. The general consensus among historians is that there was little opportunity for organised team games for working-class girls or exercise for pleasure before 1914.⁴² They were far less likely to have surplus cash to pay for subscriptions to clubs, and have less leisure time available because of domestic duties. Working-class female involvement in sport, therefore, was limited and was further handicapped by the hostility of middle-class females towards it.⁴³ It is possible to see the provision of sport facilities for munitions workers as a new opportunity for working-class women to get involved in sport. Woollacott asserts that sport became part of the cultural fabric of the wartime factory and such opportunities were 'truly extraordinary.' However, she also acknowledges that if this was part of a factory culture designed to encompass all aspects of life - Gretna could hardly be a better

⁴⁰ CJ, May 22, 1917, report of Royal visit.

⁴¹ Tranter, Sport, Economy & Society, p. 8. McCrone, Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women, pp. 129-31.

⁴² See, for example, R. Holt, Sport and the British, p. 118. J. Hargreaves, Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sport (1994), pp. 68, 107-8.

⁴³ K. McCrone, 'Class, Gender and Women's Sport c 1890-1914', Journal of Sport History 18, 1 (1990), pp. 151-82.

example - it had its origins in the nineteenth century, as Patrick Joyce has identified.⁴⁴ Cadbury's at Bournville provided physical education and sports facilities and was 'a centre for social life'.⁴⁵ Northern factory employers saw sport or physical exercise, not as a means of enjoyment, but as a tool to create a company culture and as a means of raising workforce morale and the efficiency of the workforce. When the Quaker reformer J.D. Carr opened his biscuit factory in Carlisle in 1837 he provided a swimming baths for the workforce, thus promoting cleanliness and healthy exercise.⁴⁶

At Gretna a number of sports clubs were organised, all under the sanction of the Social and Athletic Association. The opportunities were certainly there for increased female working-class participation. It is less clear, however, as to the class composition of these clubs. The factory Recreation Committee comprised the higher echelons of factory administrators, including Miss Cotterell, the Lady Welfare Superintendent, the Gretna Town Manager, the Dornock and Mossband area managers, the acids section manager, the factory accountant and Ernest Taylor, the social manager. Also on the committee was Captain K.A. Wolfe Barry, an assistant superintendent who was also chairman of the Gretna Sports Committee, and head of the Gretna boxing and wrestling clubs, carpet bowls club, cricket club, tennis club and the Factory Football League. The Dornock area manager, H.B. Fergusson, occupied similar posts for the Easttriggs sports clubs. Below the Recreation Committee came the Social and Recreation Department, run by Ernest Taylor and three female assistants, Miss J. Ferguson, Miss I.M. Fryer and Miss E.R. Brown. Thus, not surprisingly, factory officials were closely involved with supervising recreation.⁴⁷ The Hockey Club was a popular initiative. Several teams of both sexes from different sections of the factory were in existence. The class composition of the

⁴⁴ A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 135-7. P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1980).

⁴⁵ C. Dellheim - 'The Creation of a Company Culture: Cadburys 1861-1931' - *American Historical Review* 92, 1987, pp. 13-44.

⁴⁶ M. Forster, *Rich Desserts & Captain Thin's: A Family & their Times 1831-1931* (1997), pp. 53-6 & 203.

⁴⁷ For a full list of officials, see PRO, Mun 4/7508, HM Factory Gretna: Social & Recreation Dept, November 1918.

female players cannot be properly identified. Some players, however, would surely have been middle-class females with previous experience of the game. The predominantly middle and upper-class Women Police, 'staunch adherents of the game', according to Ernest Taylor, had their own hockey and social clubs.⁴⁸ Clearly social distinctions in recreation were not entirely dissolved during this period. Given the degree of mutual distrust and suspicion between the Women Police and munitions workers, this is hardly surprising.⁴⁹ Whatever the social composition of the hockey teams was, however, there was clearly a degree of competitiveness. This feature had worried critics of women's sport before the War when middle-class hockey players engaging in rough play were considered to be behaving outside accepted gender and class norms.⁵⁰ At Gretna matches between teams from different section and shifts often had this competitive edge. Ernest Taylor was at pains to point out, however, that the rivalry was 'keen', but 'good-natured.'⁵¹

The boxing and wrestling clubs were clearly intended for male participants, as was the cricket club which played both inter-departmental matches and games with other clubs in the area. Social composition of the club is unclear, although, again middle-class involvement is apparent. The club was seen as an ideal opportunity for office staff to engage in 'some healthy outdoor exercise'.⁵² However, some of the Women Police appear to have played cricket at Gretna, probably within the confines of their own social arrangements. One member of the WPS described her leisure time as 'dancing, singing, playing with the orchestra, cricketing, playing tennis, or having a quiet evening by the fire in the recreation room, or at the Policewoman's Club, to which she may invite her friends'.⁵³ The Bowls and Carpet Bowls clubs appear to be

⁴⁸ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p10.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 7.

⁵⁰ McCrone, *Sport and the Emancipation of Women*, p. 131.

⁵¹ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p. 10.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵³ IWM, Emp 43/102, HM Factory Gretna: The Day's Work of the Policewomen.

predominantly for male workers. Bowls, in particular, attracted a large male membership. At an end-of-season social event invitations were issued to 'all members and their ladies'. The Tennis Club was also a thriving concern, with tournaments organised for teams from different sections of the factory and also matches against neighbouring local clubs. Female participation is evident to a certain degree. On some mornings the Courts were reserved for members of the Girls Gymnastic Classes.⁵⁴ Again, the extent of working-class membership is unclear.

Another factory-organised sport was athletics. Holding summer sports days was a means of involving the whole of the factory. Its success was promoted vigorously by the Social Department and factory managers. It was regarded as one of the highlights of the social year and 'afforded enjoyment for thousands of spectators'.⁵⁵ This was not just an exercise in providing a sporting facility, but a means of producing social cohesion among all workers. This may well have made such events so important for factory officials. Categories were held for both male and female workers. The 'girls', it was noted, 'have displayed great keenness to gain awards not so much, perhaps, for themselves as from a desire to bring honour to their shifts or hostel'. From the nineteenth century social reformers had recognised that working-class girls had a strong code of group loyalty. This was difficult to break down, and troubling for reformers if part of that group were deemed to be a bad influence.⁵⁶ Group loyalties, therefore, could be emphasised in a constructive way by organising girls into sporting sides. Teams from different hostels annually competed in a relay race for a challenge cup, donated by the Lady Welfare Superintendent.⁵⁷ The Social and Athletic Association held its first sports meeting in May 1917 at Baxter's Farm, Easttriggs. The event drew a large crowd where female spectators 'livened proceedings by singing'. The races for females had received large entries 'and they ran with as much vigour as

⁵⁴ IWM, Mun 14/10, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ M. Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (1985), pp. 240-1.

⁵⁷ IWM, Mun 14/10, p. 12.

the men'. There was clearly a difference, however, in the type of athletics events held. The women's events featured an obstacle race, an egg and spoon race, potato race, threading the needle, a running and skipping event and a three-legged race. A 75-yards race appears to have been the nearest equivalent to a serious athletics event. In contrast, the men's events included 100, 220 and 440-yard races, long jump, high jump, a tug-of-war, and hammer and shot events. A number of less serious races were also held for males, but clearly women's events were perceived as a novelty item designed primarily for amusement.⁵⁸ Athleticism, in that sense, still remained a masculine prerogative, underlining cultural norms. Yet female workers still entered for sports events and attended them in significant numbers. The social meaning was an important facet, enabling workers to meet, compete, identify with fellow hostel or shift colleagues and legitimise their public presence at such events. This was certainly more than just an opportunity for female munitions workers to display sporting prowess.

Other sporting/social occasions also drew large crowds of female workers. The Gretna Carnival attracted a crowd of 3,000 in July 1917. Sporting events were featured, including a 100-yard race for female workers, but there were also dancing competitions and concerts.⁵⁹ A fete at Eastriggs in the summer of 1918 mingled sports events with cultural exhibitions and commercial amusements. An amazing array of attractions included football contests, bowls, croquet and putting events, an art gallery, concerts, highland dances, mock-ups of a kaffir kraal, a gipsy camp, a German pillbox and a Western front trench. Aerial flights were also on offer along with a helter skelter, an American dodger, a haunted castle, a rifle range, donkey rides, and bands and refreshments. Here was an acknowledgement that rational recreation attempts alone could not successfully compete for working-class leisure time.

⁵⁸ CJ, May 29, 1917.

⁵⁹ CJ, July 13, 1917.

Women and Football

Football was an overwhelmingly working-class sport by 1914. The formation of the Football Association in 1863 was largely the work of ex-public school and university men who grafted on a more organised game to the popular sport that existed everywhere. Their codification and standardisation of the game played a pivotal role in the development of football as a national sport. From the 1880's, however, the introduction of professionalism and the rising popularity of competitive tournaments such as the FA Cup had given the sport a distinct ethos, far removed from the amateur and character-building version which emerged from the public schools.⁶⁰ Not only were more and more people playing soccer, but a dramatic rise in spectatorship confirmed the sport as an integral part of working-class culture. The Sheffield Green Un estimated that nearly 330,000 spectators watched Football League and Southern League matches each week in the 1911-12 season. Around four million watched first division games in 1908-9.⁶¹ Those who played, organised and watched football before the War were exclusively male and working-class, with a significant proportion of those belonging to the skilled section of that stratum.⁶² A reduction of working hours and the introduction of half-day Saturday working had given a sizeable proportion of the population more leisure time. Those with more irregular incomes or lower paid workers were less likely to attend League matches which might involve paying for transport to the ground and would certainly require an entrance fee.⁶³ Football also had other links to male working-class culture: gambling and drinking were its natural partners. Pub football teams proliferated from the late nineteenth century. They provided facilities for changing before a match and for meeting

⁶⁰ See T. Mason, Association Football and English Society (Brighton, 1980).

⁶¹ Cited in N. Fishwick, English Football and Society (Manchester, 1989), pp. 48-9. T. Mason, Association Football, p. 169.

⁶² T. Mason, Association Football, p. 157.

⁶³ A. Davies, Leisure, Gender & Poverty (Buckingham, 1992), p. 38.

afterwards. Some also had adjoining land to provide a playing area. Even non-players and non-attenders could talk about the sport in the pub. Football was a commercially viable form of attracting customers. Some publicans were quick to take advantage of new forms of communication by having results telegraphed to the pub where they could be seen for free and earlier than elsewhere.⁶⁴ Betting on football, whether via bookmakers or in newspaper competitions further integrated the sport into working class culture.⁶⁵

If the above analysis tends to confirm that female involvement in soccer, and certainly in the playing of the sport, was minimal before the First World War, then what is noticeable is the dramatic increase in women playing football between 1914 and 1918. Furthermore, it was a phenomenon specifically associated with young munitions workers. Before the War there appears to have been a small amount of football played in women's colleges, although most contemporaries saw the sport as being far too physical for women. Football, with its association with working-class aggression and competitiveness, was also viewed as having connections unsuitable for 'ladies'. Furthermore, medical opinion regarded football as dangerous for women. Sudden physical bodily contact could be dangerous to female reproductive systems.⁶⁶

Women's football teams in munitions factories appear to have been prevalent throughout Britain. At Gretna there were several teams, drawn from different departments, playing the game, while the Cumberland Shell Filling Factory at Carlisle also boasted a side. In West Cumbria munitions teams were formed at Workington, Whitehaven, Seaton and Cockermouth.⁶⁷ Hackney Marshes National Projectile factory had several women's teams, as did the Lancaster munitions works. Football at the Tipton factory, near Wolverhampton, was 'a great favourite'. The

⁶⁴ T. Mason, *Association Football*, p. 27.

⁶⁵ See, for example, M. Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter: Popular Gambling and English Society, c 1823-1961* (Manchester, 1992), Chapter 7. S.G. Jones, *Workers at Play* (1986).

⁶⁶ K. McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women*, pp. 128 & 201.

⁶⁷ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p10. *AO*, September 14, 1917, *CJ*, May 11, 1917 and April 5, 1918.

women's team at the Swansea National Shell Filling Factory won three cups and remained unbeaten during 1918. Over in the North-East women's football was particularly popular. Armstrong Whitworth's engineering works boasted a number of sides drawn from nearly every section of the works. There the three most popular forms of leisure for young women were dancing, swimming and football. Blyth Spartans ran a women's side and featured a prolific goal scorer in Bella Reay, who had hit around 100 goals during 1918. That suggests that matches between women's sides were regular enough for Reay to have achieved the feat, even if the statistical claim cannot be verified. In any event there were enough teams to merit the organisation of the Tyne, Wear and Tees Munitionettes Challenge Cup in 1918 that spanned the whole of the North-East. Women's teams were also a feature at Vickers works at Barrow: the Cardonald National Factory in Glasgow had at least three women's teams.⁶⁸

Why should football suddenly be such a popular recreation outlet for munitions workers, given that females had little tradition of playing the game and that cultural norms were heavily directed towards disapproval? If football was a bastion of working class masculinity,⁶⁹ with its inbuilt assumptions of male exclusivity, this should not preclude a complete separation from female experience. In other words, working-class females 'knew' about the culture of football in a way that middle and upper-class females did not. They could hardly do otherwise. Young girls could readily see brothers and their friends playing impromptu games in working-class neighbourhoods: football was a part of juvenile street culture that resisted police attempts to curb it and the anger of disturbed neighbours.⁷⁰ Football inserted itself not only outside the home, but inside it as well. It was discussed, analysed and commented on as well as watched and played. Although female attendance at

⁶⁸ IWM, WWC, Mun 21/15, 21/17, 21/39, 23/17, 24/15. CJ, April 12, 1918.

⁶⁹ T. Mason, Association Football, pp. 152-3.

⁷⁰ S. Humphries, Hooligans Or Rebels? (1981) (1995 pb edn), pp. 202-3.

professional matches declined from the 1890s, when free admission for women was withdrawn, some females still continued to go to matches. Dave Russell suggests that their presence in greater numbers at FA Cup-ties was due to their being more akin to surrogate holiday occasions than League matches, thus legitimising their attendance.⁷¹

What stopped young females from fuller involvement with the game was cultural disapproval and less leisure time than their male siblings. The War provided an opportunity for young munitions workers to take up the game. It was also a sport that needed little initial expertise or equipment and facilities were available at munitions factories. At Gretna football maintained its popularity among male workers. The factory initially had enough male players to run two separate Leagues, one for Gretna and Mossband District and the other for Eastriggs and Dornock. This was later formed into one Factory League with teams entered from not only different sections of the factory but also from the townships and the military. The standard was probably quite high as a number of well-known professionals were employed at Gretna. This may have concerned factory recreational officials. In his report Ernest Taylor was at pains to point out that the professionals played purely 'for the love of the game'. To ensure this the Leagues were run in accordance with amateur rules. Yet the competitive spirit remained. A knockout competition was also organised for a Challenge Shield trophy. 'Auld Enemy' matches between English and Scottish teams ensured traditional rivalries flourished, for, as Taylor noted, 'none have aroused more excitement or enthusiasm'.⁷² Significantly, therefore, football facilities such as pitches and equipment were already available for male workers. Because some female munitions workers also played football they were, as Woollacott notes, demonstrating class allegiances as well as challenging gender constrictions.⁷³

⁷¹ D. Russell, *Football and the English* (1997), p. 57.

⁷² IWM, Women's Work Collection, Mun 14/10, p. 10.

⁷³ A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 138.

The social composition of the women's teams is not completely identifiable, however. The majority of girls were probably overwhelmingly working-class. Significantly, no sides had the word 'Ladies' in their title and many of the sides were drawn from works departments where working-class females predominated. For instance, the Ryton factory teams in Tyne and Wear comprised workshop girls.⁷⁴ They were also predominantly young. Eighteen of the Carlisle and Workington players participating in a charity match in Carlisle in May 1917 were single females. In another match in the city later that year between Carlisle and Gretna workers 21 of the players were single.⁷⁵ Middle-class welfare workers did become involved to some extent, however, if not directly involved. At Armstrong Whitworth's in Newcastle, women's football was 'chiefly organised by the workers themselves with the sympathy and support of the Welfare staff'. There was, unsurprisingly, also some male involvement. The Armstrong Whitworth teams were coached by workshop men and a mixed committee was formed to run the sides. At the Georgetown factory in Glasgow the girls' team was coached by William Barr and 'were proving themselves no mean experts at the game'.⁷⁶ Were such males ensuring that any factory football was played under male control or were these men simply willing to offer their time and support because they had some sympathy with the concept of women playing football? The answer probably lies somewhere in between the two positions. Male involvement in coaching women would have made sense, however. The need to organise novice players into absorbing team-based tactics and to develop individual skills still required people with football experience. It also signifies that some females were intent on playing the game seriously, hence the need for proper instruction.

A significant aspect of women's football is that there were two distinct components to the sport, which illuminate contemporary attitudes to the phenomenon. The first

⁷⁴ Gateshead Library, Tom Marshall Archive, Women's Work and Leisure Collection.

⁷⁵ CJ, May 11 and September 4, 1917.

⁷⁶ IWM, WWC, Mun 24 and 24/15, Recreation at Armstrong Whitworth's. PRO, Mun 5/154/1122.3/30, Georgetown Gazette, July 18, 1918.

was the presentation of women's football as wartime novelty. When the game was reported in newspapers it was invariably when matches were played for charity. Such games were often played on professional football grounds and often attracted large crowds. An Armstrong Whitworth's team played a Vickers side at Newcastle United's St James' Park in December 1917 and drew a crowd of 8,000. The match was in aid of the Armstrong Whitworth Girls Benevolent Fund. A return match was organised at Barrow, and when the series ended all-square a decider was arranged which Armstrong Whitworth's won 1-0. Celtic Park in Glasgow was the venue for a women's match between a Cardonald Projectile Factory team and Parkhead Forge in aid of widows and orphans of journalists killed in the War.⁷⁷ In April 1918 Carlisle Munitionettes, a team comprising workers from the Cumberland Shell Filling Factory in the city, played a side from Elswick in the North-East at Carlisle United's Brunton Park ground. The match was played in aid of a war prisoners' fund. In September 1917 Carlisle Munitionettes played Mossband Swifts, a team of Gretna female workers at Brunton Park in aid of the Friendless Girls Association. In May 1917 a crowd of 5,000 watched a women's match between a Carlisle side and a Workington team at Whitehaven in aid of a new military hospital. The return match at Brunton Park was again played in front of a large crowd.⁷⁸

What was the composition of the crowd and why had they paid to see such a spectacle? Female participation in sport in full view of the public gaze was a rare occurrence before the War. When females played organised sport it was usually in front of a selective audience that did not include working-class men. Middle-class women had usually played sport on college grounds in front of their social peers. For the first women's hockey international in England in 1897 tickets were distributed free to female members of hockey clubs to avoid 'roughs and other undesirable

⁷⁷ IWM, WWC, Mun 24. Mun VII/21, Cardonald News, December 21, 1917.

⁷⁸ AO, September 14, 1917. CJ, May 8, May 11, September 25, 1917, April 5, April 12, 1918.

spectators'.⁷⁹ The chance for males to publicly view respectable women's bodies in a relative state of undress was largely unheard of. In 1890 a group of entrepreneurs had organised a cricket match between two female teams in London. The sides went on tour and played in front of 15,000 at Liverpool. It was noted, despite assurances that the women 'would be elegantly and appropriately attired', that the Original English Lady Cricketers had daring skirts 14ins from the ground. In the mid-1890s a British Ladies Football Club tried to promote soccer for women and Lady Florence Dixey organised women's exhibition football in Scotland in the early 1900s.⁸⁰ Sexual titillation for male spectators, therefore, watching physically active young munitions workers must surely have been part of the attraction. Munitions teams invariably played in some form of clothing suitable for football. In the match between Carlisle and Workington munitions workers at Whitehaven the Carlisle team wore short navy skirts, along with white jerseys and caps with blue trimmings. When Carlisle Munitionettes played Mossband Swifts, the Gretna side wore, appropriately enough, khaki shorts, with red jerseys and khaki caps.⁸¹ This was clothing which enabled greater sporting freedom and proficiency and less restriction on the female body. Pictorial evidence of other munitions teams suggest that such clothing was common.⁸²

If sexual reasons partly explain the motive of the crowd then amusement must surely have been another. The sight of females engaged in the normally masculine stronghold of football had its novelty side. Treating the spectacle as a frivolity was also a useful method of disarming the potential threat of a challenge to male exclusivity. The matches could be portrayed as another manifestation of the image of

⁷⁹ Cited in McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women*, p. 131.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp143 & 231. McCrone, Williams and Woodhouse, 'Can Play, Will Play? Women & Football in Britain', in J. Williams and S Wagg (eds), *British Football & Social Change* (Leicester, 1991), p. 90.

⁸¹ *CJ*, May 11 and September 11, 1917.

⁸² See photographs of women's teams in, for example, University of Leeds, Liddle Archive and Gateshead Library, Tom Marshall Archive.

the female munitions worker: here for the duration and to be accorded a temporary status outside traditional gender roles, but not to be taken seriously.

Having said that, it must be remembered that, comparatively, the standard of play was generally poor. It could not have been otherwise, given the short space of time in which females had taken up the game. Inexperience rather than physical ability was surely the most significant factor. Some players appear to have had a natural aptitude for the game and certainly displayed elements of skill. What was probably most noticeable to a football crowd was the lack of sophistication in team tactics. Reports of such games give this impression. The Carlisle Journal reported that 'some amusing incidents were enjoyed by the spectators. There was a lack of combination and the players were eager to receive and part with the ball, their respective positions being temporarily forgotten, but clever individual tactics were pursued by both teams, and they tackled with determination'. At a later match between Carlisle and Whitehaven munitions workers, in aid of the Discharged Soldiers and Sailors Association, the sarcastic tone of the report was unmistakable: 'The Carlisle girls exhibited a distinct improvement upon the play of the last match and the scientific combination between the players and their attention to position enabled the onlookers to follow the plan of campaign with less difficulty'.⁸³ Subsequent reports, however, tended to treat the game in a less light-hearted vein and teams began to be printed at the end of the reports. When Carlisle played Mossband in a Boxing Day match at Brunton Park in 1917 a more orthodox match description was given.⁸⁴ Some teams' standard of play clearly differed from others. When Blyth Spartans' girls team played Carlisle Munitionettes at Brunton Park they easily won 3-0 with Bella Reay scoring twice. Those sides who played and who were coached regularly and who involved themselves in more competitive games were invariably the teams that performed at a higher standard. The Blyth team, significantly, also reached the final of the Tyne,

⁸³ CJ, May 22 and September 25, 1917.

⁸⁴ CJ, December 28, 1917.

Wear and Tees Munitionettes Challenge Cup. The Carlisle Munitionettes do not appear to have played other than charity games.⁸⁵

The spectators who came along to such matches were probably not simply male, however. If munitions workers were challenging traditional gender assumptions about the playing of sport, then they also occupied a further social space as spectators. Female munitions workers may have made up a significant proportion of the crowds at wartime women's matches. In the 5,000-strong crowd at the charity match at Whitehaven between Carlisle and Workington in May 1917 were 'hundreds' of Workington supporters wearing their team's colours. No clue as to sex was offered in the report but it can be tentatively suggested that such women's teams produced their own following of work colleagues or female friends. Thus female sports participation during the war may well have produced the opportunity for more female spectatorship. This area of investigation requires future research, however.

Women's football, played under the respectable veneer of novelty and legitimised as benefiting the country's war effort, was therefore more widely noticed and commented on by contemporaries. If women's charity matches produced amusement among males, there appears to have been little condemnation of its practice, in distinct contrast to the male professional game, which drew much scorn in England for continuing during 1914. Physically healthy working-class males were held up to public condemnation for playing for money instead of fighting for their country. The Football Association, under increasing pressure, and in financial difficulties due to decreasing attendances, cancelled the Football League programme in Spring 1915.⁸⁶ Football continued, however, at a recreational level, as illustrated by the numbers of male teams at factories such as Gretna. Female munitions workers teams, too, did not simply play charity games.

⁸⁵ CJ, April 23, 1918.

⁸⁶ G. DeGroot, Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War (1996), pp. 226-30.

At Ryton in the North-East inter-shop matches were played and knockout competitions were also organised as the Tyne, Wear and Tees Challenge Cup illustrates. In West Cumbria a Women's Cup competition was also arranged.⁸⁷ These matches appear to have a much more competitive spirit about them than the games for wartime charities. The Women's Cup final, for example, at Workington, in October 1917 ended in some controversy. Seaton beat Cockermouth 1-0, but the losers were incensed over refereeing decisions. The Mayor of Workington presented the trophy to Seaton, but 'had great difficulty in making himself heard owing to the noise caused by the losers, who alleged unfairness on the part of the referee'. The winners also received brooches: presumably it was felt that this was a more appropriate commemoration for females than medals, but the Cockermouth players refused to accept them.⁸⁸ Clearly the match meant a great deal to the players. It was taken seriously and no doubt local rivalry added an edge to the occasion. Female players displaying such 'unfeminine' behaviour showed that the working-class hard-edged attitude to football was not merely a characteristic of male footballers. It is this aspect that would have worried those who feared that wartime circumstances were capable of challenging cultural norms.

This is illustrated by the attitude adopted to women's football at the Gretna factory. Although a Gretna side, the Mossband Swifts, appeared in charity games, there were other women's sides at the factory who appear to have arranged matches between themselves. Ernest Taylor mentions that there were 'one or two' football clubs for women. These sides played on pitches provided by the Recreation Department and such facilities were used regularly.⁸⁹ As at other factories the teams were drawn from different work sections. The A-shift at the Mossband section, for example, formed a women's team in September 1917. The club was run by the workers 'on first class

⁸⁷ Gateshead Library, Tom Marshall Archive. CJ, October 16, 1917.

⁸⁸ CJ, October 30, 1917.

⁸⁹ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p. 10.

lines'.⁹⁰ What separated these clubs from all the other sports organisations at Gretna was that they were not officially sanctioned. All clubs formed at Gretna had to be affiliated to the Social and Athletic Association so that factory officials could more easily monitor the running of such groups. Yet the women football clubs were not officially affiliated to the Association. Clearly there was some tension surrounding the existence of such clubs. Taylor acknowledged that 'a good many ' played the game 'really well', but there was 'some division of opinion as to the wisdom of encouraging them to pursue this branch of sport'.⁹¹ The female players had not been prohibited from playing matches, but the lack of official approval is telling. It suggests that the demand to play such matches by some of the workforce was quite strong and factory officials may have decided it would be more politic to allow it, even though they would not officially sanction it. It is also possible that some of the opposition came from male workers determined to retain the sport as a male bastion. Possibly both reasons enter the equation. It is, however, tentatively suggested that the 'problem' arises over the incidence of girls playing football in a competitive fashion. The 'novelty' matches in aid of wartime charities appear to have been derided for their lack of expertise but achieved some degree of respectability by being presented as helping the War effort. For example, newspaper reports did not openly condemn the matches, but disarmed them with humour or passed them off as a frivolity. When women began playing the game in a way that emphasised competitiveness and aggressive rivalry this became much more of a challenge to the gender order.

The idea that women's football was a temporary wartime aberration and would disappear once peacetime returned and women went back to the home either as mothers, respectful daughters or domestic servants is conveyed in a verse reproduced in The Bombshell, a factory magazine of the National Factory at Templeborough. It also suggested that women would be glad to give up such masculine pursuits as

⁹⁰ CJ, September 25, 1917.

⁹¹ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p10.

football and return to more genteel pursuits. 'The Lady Football Players' was a parody of 'When This Rotten War Is Over' and was obviously meant to be sung to the same tune. It could be read, therefore, as either a comment on women's attitude to wartime roles or as a parody of what men believed women should be thinking about adopting masculine habits. The sex of the author is unknown.

The Lady Football Players

Only one more football practice
Only one more tram to catch.
Only one more goal to score
Then we've won this football match.
When this rotten match is over
Oh! How happy I shall be.
When I get my blouse and skirt on
No more footballing for me.⁹²

There were, however, some females who did not abandon the game after the War. Women's football continued to be played in the inter-war years, and its growth during this period has been noted by historians. The existence of teams formed by munitions workers during the First World War must have stimulated female interest in the game.⁹³ The most famous women's team, the Dick, Kerr Ladies began as a Lancashire munitions side and after the War often played before large crowds in charity matches and even toured abroad.⁹⁴ Such sides continued to play friendly or charity games which continued to be the rationale for female football. Probably the loss of facilities made available to women by Government factories contributed to

⁹² IWM, WWC, The Bombshell, June 1917.

⁹³ See D. Williamson, Belles of the Ball (Exeter, 1991). J Williams and J Woodhouse, 'Can Play, Will Play? Women and Football in Britain'.

⁹⁴ See G. J. Newsham, In a League of Their Own (Chorley, 1994), for a history of the Dick, Kerr Ladies.

hold back the organisation of more competitive matches. By 1921 there were at least 150 women's teams in England, mainly playing charity games or friendlies. The Football Association's decision to deny them the use of club grounds affiliated to the F.A. in December 1921 marginalised the game even further. Claims that women were being paid to play and suspicions of profits being diverted away from charities were used as reasons for the decision. But, as Russell points out, the decision was in line with the eradication of general social and economic gains made by women during the First World War.⁹⁵ Clearly the 'division of opinion,' noted by Ernest Taylor at Gretna, over the suitability of allowing women to play football continued to resonate strongly after the War.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The provision of facilities by the Ministry of Munitions opened up new opportunities for women to challenge the idea that recreation was a privilege for male breadwinners. Woollacott asserts that such facilities as music and theatrical societies, reading rooms and sports provision enabled the female workforce to participate in the culture of self-improvement that had previously only been available to male artisans or skilled workers. Just as commercial entertainment was gaining an even greater hold on workers' leisure time, rational recreation reformers attempted to reshape women's recreation into an earlier model.⁹⁷ On the evidence of this chapter, female munitions workers were capable of adapting this model offered by the Ministry of Munitions to their own desires and needs. When the opportunity to go to dances and to socialise with male partners was provided this was utilised enormously. Improving lectures and instructional classes were, unsurprisingly, less popular. The contest between 'amusement' and 'healthy recreation' had reached such a point that

⁹⁵ D. Williamson, *Belles of the Ball*, pp. 68-9. D. Russell, *Football and the English*, pp. 95-8.

⁹⁶ IWM, WWC, Mun 14/10, p10.

⁹⁷ A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 134-7.

the Ministry of Munitions and voluntary groups such as the YWCA realised that, unless social functions such as dances were provided, their chances of influencing young munitions workers were considerably reduced.

Even when more cultural offerings were utilised workers did not always use them in an anticipated way. For example, workers who went along to the Dramatic Society took the opportunity to improve their skills at entertaining fellow workers at their own hostel functions rather than participate in official productions. What could be used to further the process of socialising either in same-sex or mixed sex social spaces was important. In that sense factory recreation provision did not drastically change working class females' leisure choices. The cinema, dancing and social functions were the most popular, as they had been before 1914. Young munitions workers with less familial duties took the opportunity to expand this type of leisure opportunity, not necessarily take up 'improving' recreation. And, even when new forms were chosen, such as the opportunity to play football, it was often part of existing working-class culture rather than the educative leisure pursuits of the middle-class. The sudden explosion of women's football during the War tends to suggest that this was a craze that was taken up by young female workers. However, challenging traditional gender roles by displaying competitive and physical attributes clearly worried some contemporaries that boundaries were being breached to an unacceptable level for society. Questioning referees' authority or competence and lack of deference to authority figures was not part of the rational recreation scheme.

Chapter 6

Munitions Workers and Public Behaviour

'The Greatest Danger'

In February 1917 the Bishop of London paid a visit to the Gretna factory to address the female workers. He praised them for the 'dangerous work' which they carried out, but he went on to warn them that the greatest peril they faced was not at work: it was the moral danger they encountered outside. Two months later the author Annie S. Swann gave a talk at a crowded Border Hall in Gretna on her recent visit to France and her experiences on the Western Front. The Carlisle Journal noted that 'she made a very stirring appeal to the women and girls and asked them to live as well as they worked, with a high moral standard'.¹ Anxiety about moral standards and female factory workers was not a new phenomenon, however. It had its origins in the nineteenth century when women and girls were believed to be prey to sexual exploitation.² In wartime, however, with a heavier strain imposed upon social stability, concerns about the erosion of moral standards are often emphasised. This was certainly true in World War I. Sylvia Pankhurst castigated the 'alarmist morality mongers' who feared that females freed from the controls of fathers and husbands would give way to sexual abandon.³ Previous discourses on women as passive victims of male sexual licence were still openly voiced, but fears were also being raised that young working-class women were now displaying a new sexual identity that embodied sexual desire and a degree of autonomy.⁴

¹ CJ, February 13, and April 6, 1917.

² See for example, F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (1892), pp. 173 & 205-6.

³ S. Pankhurst, The Home Front (1987 edn), p. 98. Similar fears were also expressed in World War II. See, for example, P. Summerfield Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives (Manchester, 1998), pp. 164-5.

⁴ See A. Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever and Its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', Journal of Contemporary History, Vol 29 (1994).

It is not surprising that young munitions workers were being identified as a particular area of concern. Gretna was a prime example, with a predominantly young, single female workforce, many of whom were imported into the area from all over the United Kingdom. They could be fcted as patriotic workers, enduring hardship and danger by working long hours in an explosives factory. Outside the workplace however, there remained the possibility that such workers would form new relationships and possibly break old ones, an important concern when maintaining morale among the armed forces was crucial to the war effort. What *were* Tommy's wife, daughter and girlfriend doing on the home front while men were fighting? This anxiety about female propriety created a tension about expected standards of behaviour. Would women in a more public role be prey to sexual predators or would they take the opportunity to initiate sexual choices of their own making? Such a tension can be seen in a patriotic poem written about Gretna munitions workers in 1917. A. Burns' 'The Gretna Girls' celebrates the diverse social composition of the workforce - 'from sweet sixteen to sixty' - and coming from the North-East, Yorkshire, Lancashire, the Scottish Highlands and Ireland. Burns suggests a high degree of social harmony and contentment: 'Pouring from their hostels, happy gay and bright / Weekday, Sunday, holiday, morning noon and night.' 'Their new role as munitions workers is defined as patriotic: 'Rosy cheeks or white cheeks, each is doing her best / To help our gallant warriors fighting East and West. / Write and tell your soldier pal, it's sure to cheer his heart / To know the girl he left behind so nobly plays her part.' The following two lines, however, suddenly fracture this idyllic image: 'If he hears about her "clicking", tell him not to worry, / When he returns the "home reserves" will "dismiss" in a hurry.'⁵ The lines suggest this emerging tension over wartime behaviour. It also underlines the fears that moral standards would break down during wartime: the 'greatest danger' for such women, as the Bishop of London warned them on his trip to Gretna in 1917.

⁵ A. Burns, 'The Gretna Girls', (Carlisle), 1917.

This chapter focuses on the systems adopted to maintain moral standards, in particular the use of women police to regulate female social behaviour. The implications of gender, class and age in the relationship between women police and munitions workers is explored as is the conflict between cultural assumptions of those who did the policing and those who were policed. It is in this area that the tension between traditional and emerging sexual identities can be detected.

Women and Policing

The presence of women police patrolling the streets during the Great War has been seen as a significant step in the emancipatory process for women. Arthur Marwick and David Mitchell, for example, have portrayed them as a pioneering corps which challenged the prevailing assumption that police work was a masculine occupation.⁶ More recent work on policewomen has paid attention to the paradox that while police work was liberating to the mainly middle and upper-class women who performed it, the regulation of public behaviour of working-class women may have alienated those whose rights they were supposed to be protecting.⁷ Although the sight of women in uniform representing authority was a novel sight in wartime Britain there were continuities with the past in relation to the work they performed. This often comprised cautioning and advising girls about their behaviour, warning them of the moral dangers of casual relationships and checking public spaces for signs of immorality.⁸ In many ways women police - like welfare supervisors - saw themselves, and behaved, as surrogate parents. Such a role had a precedent with late nineteenth century social reform and rescue work. Social purity organisations such as the National Vigilance Association (NVA) and the Criminal Law Amendment (CLA) Committee were both prominent in agitating for women police. The NVA, founded in

⁶ A. Marwick, *Women at War* (1977). D. Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath* (1966), pp. 389 & 211-21.

⁷ A. Woodson, 'The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement?', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 2 (1993).

⁸ PRO, MEPO 2/1748, Reports of Work Done by Women Patrols, March 1918.

1885, was prominent in attempting to close down brothels, clear the streets of prostitutes and clean up public entertainment places such as music halls and theatres. The CLA Committee campaigned to tighten the prohibition on white slavery and raise the age of consent from 13 to 16. Walkowitz sees the widespread publicity given to white slavery and child prostitution campaigns of the 1880's as symptoms of cultural paranoia in Britain. It also focused on youthful sexuality as a dangerous form of activity, requiring coercion to control voluntary sexual responses.⁹ This coercive aspect in an attempt to enforce morality worried some feminists. Josephine Butler, for example, warned colleagues to beware of social purists 'ready to accept and endorse any amount of inequality in the laws, any amount of coercive and degrading treatment of their fellow creatures in the fatuous belief that you can oblige human beings to be moral by force'.¹⁰

Suffragette organisations such as the Women's Social and Political Union and the breakaway Women's Freedom League (WFL) also campaigned for the use of women in police procedures. Edith Watson and Nina Boyle of the WFL chained themselves to the door of the Marlborough Street Police Court in July 1914. The League also presented a deputation to the Home Office calling for the appointment of police women which was supported by the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW), the NVA and the Mother's Union. The growing clamour for a female presence in policing therefore predated World War I but the outbreak of the War does seem to have been the catalyst for the acceptance of the idea.¹¹ Two organisations were formed to patrol streets and parks in wartime. The Women Police Volunteers (WPV) were founded by Nina Boyle and attempted to open up the police service as a full-time career opportunity for women. The Women Patrols of the NUWW were

⁹ L. Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914* (1995), p. 52 & 95-123. J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 246-9.

¹⁰ Cited in Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, pp. 99-100.

¹¹ Woodson, 'The First Women Police' p. 219

organised on a more part-time and voluntary basis.¹² The Women's Police Service (WPS) was formed following a split in the feminist camp over whether or not to implement the wartime Defence of the Realm Regulation 40D, which permitted the detention and prosecution of infected women accused of having sexual relations with members of the armed forces. This division had echoes of the campaigns of the 1870s and 1880s to abolish the Contagious Diseases Act which had been introduced to regulate prostitution and check the spread of venereal disease among the military.¹³ Boyle and the WPV refused to implement the DORA regulation and were subsequently ignored by the authorities.¹⁴ The WPS, under the leadership of Margaret Damer Dawson, a member of the NVA and CLA, and the suffragette Mary Allen agreed to co-operate with the regulation. To the WPS the chance to open up the police service to women took priority over concerns about the 'double standard' of the regulation which condoned male sexual licence while penalising women for the same practice.¹⁵

The Women Police Groups

In the nineteenth century feminist discourses on sex chiefly concentrated on the problem of protecting women from undesired sex and of curtailing male sexual licence. Changing sexual relationships could be achieved through the legal system, through female suffrage, marital law reform and legal protection from sexual abuse. Eliminating sexual slavery through prostitution and mercenary marriages could be achieved by economic independence for women. In the early twentieth century a new discourse that talked about a woman's right to be sexual began to be aired. Previously the idea of female sexual identity was confined to prostitutes or women of loose

¹² For detailed accounts of the formation of women police, see Woodeson, 'The First Women Police'. P. Levine, 'Walking the Streets In A Way No Decent Woman Should: Women Police in World War I', *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994).

¹³ See J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*. L. Bland, *Banishing the Beast*.

¹⁴ P. Levine, 'Walking the Streets', p. 48.

¹⁵ J. Walkowitz *Prostitution & Victorian Society*, p. 3

morals. New openings in the job market for women presented the opportunity of more independence and a self-identity separate from that of the family or linked to a woman's marital status.¹⁶ Middle-class women gained public access to speak about sexual matters through the mass media and political networks in the nineteenth century. Social reform movements such as the NVA were intent on clearing the streets of prostitutes to make room for respectable women. This ability to engage in the discourse on sex opened up new possibilities for them, but, as Walkowitz points out, offered fewer possibilities for those seen as less respectable females. It enabled female reformers to articulate grievances over male sexuality while establishing authority over some working-class women.¹⁷ The work of the women police groups, described below, bore a direct relationship to this nineteenth century ideology of sexual danger.

Margaret Damer Dawson began to organise a voluntary corps of women police at the start of the War after serving on a committee dealing with organising relief for Belgian refugees. In Mary Allen's account of the WPS she relates a story of Damer Dawson's experiences at railway stations which caused her to form such patrols. While dealing with refugees she 'had been struck by the number of women loitering there (at stations), whose presence and whose object seemed unexplained: and it did not take her long to discover that the same women were appearing in different disguises, and were further likely to complicate a very difficult situation'.¹⁸ This explanation for the decision to form the WPS clearly has resonances with the pre-war intention of reformers to clear the streets to make space for respectable women. Wartime concerns about the breakdown of standards of decency gave female reformers the opportunity to enter into policing and to claim authority in the area of

¹⁶ L. Bland, 'The Shock of the Freewoman Journal', in J. Weeks and J. Holland (eds), *Sexual Cultures* (1996), pp. 76-7.

¹⁷ J. Walkowitz, 'Dangerous Sexualities', in G. Duby, M. Perrot (eds), *A History of Women in the West* Vol. IV (Harvard 1993), pp. 369-98.

¹⁸ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman* (1925), p. 9

regulating women's public behaviour.¹⁹ Mary Allen noted the wartime 'fever of excitement in the very air (which) created new and pressing problems'.²⁰ The outcome of such activities would, Allen warned, lead to a new explosion of sexual danger: 'Undesirable women in swarms, and idle boys and girls of all classes, were being irresistibly drawn towards the camps, with their noisy and fascinating activities.' What seems to have concerned Allen was the possible breakdown in family life brought about by the movement of young females. Girls poured into London from the provinces looking for employment. 'They came with no money to back their pretensions, lived goodness knows how, and were, in the majority of cases, totally ignorant of the dangers that threatened them.' The idea of working-class women with access to surplus cash further threatened social order. Allen condemned 'liberal' separation grants for soldiers' wives who had 'more money at their disposal than ever before, and were often impelled by sheer loneliness, or by anxiety for their husbands or sons at the front, to seek sympathetic society at the nearest public-house, with a sudden appalling increase of drunkenness among women as a natural result'.²¹ Concerns about 'khaki-fever' diminished as the War drew on. Woollacott attributes this to the enrolment of more women into the war effort as munitions workers, WAAFs and WRNs wore uniforms that signified their status as active participants.²² Nevertheless, the role of the women police continued and expanded during the War. Munitions workers may have taken on a new identity as patriotic workers, but as A. Burns' 1917 poem 'The Gretna Girls' hints at, concerns about a burgeoning sexual identity in working-class females were far from over.

¹⁹ A. Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever and Its Control', p. 327.

²⁰ M. Allen - *The Pioneer Policewoman*, pp16-17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

²² Woollacott 'Khaki Fever and Its Control', p. 332-3

The NUWW Patrols

While the Carlisle area was awaiting the arrival of thousands of female munitions workers to staff the Gretna factory in mid-1916, plans were already underfoot to prepare for this massive influx. The local organisers of the National Union of Women Workers in the city had formed a voluntary women's police patrol on an unofficial basis in 1914. Their role during this time appears to have been insignificant:

organisers admitted that 'the work was not found to be urgent'. However, a meeting was held in December 1915 when local organiser Miss Creighton reported that the Carlisle Chief Constable was prepared officially to sanction patrol work if enough women were forthcoming and 'if it was started quickly'. The meeting agreed to contact other women's societies in the area to discuss the matter further. Among those were the Girls Club Association, the League of Honour, the Mother's Union, the Social Services Council, the Women's Co-op Union, the YWCA and the Salvation Army.²³

Six days later a second meeting was held when it was agreed a national patrol organiser from the NUWW should be invited to Carlisle to train volunteers. Clearly the influx of female workers and the problem they would present was uppermost in the minds of those present. The organiser had experience of social work with North of England factory girls. A patrol sub-committee would be formed because of 'the changed social conditions of the city due to the proximity of a very large and important ammunition centre'. The meeting decided that present patrol work was 'unnecessary', which is perhaps surprising given that thousands of male labourers were already in the area constructing the factory. Clearly the women patrols were to be used to police the female workers, due to arrive shortly.²⁴ A third meeting was convened in January 1916 when the NUWW organiser arrived in Carlisle to address

²³ CRO DSO/80/11 National Council of Women Carlisle and District Branch: Women Patrols 1914-18 December 10 1915 meeting.

²⁴ Ibid., December 16 meeting, 1915.

those interested in forming a new patrol group. Miss Hawksley stressed that the work was 'not rescue or detective' work but 'preventive, especially for young girls from 14 to 20'. The patrols would work in couples. What these patrols would be doing clearly was not supported by all women's organisations. A Miss Rimington, from the Women's Co-op Union, volunteered for patrol work but stressed she would be acting in a private capacity as the Women's Co-op 'were not in favour of the scheme'. Probably the idea of upper and middle-class women regulating working-class females' public behaviour was less likely to find favour with working-class organisations. A week later Miss Hawksley addressed a further meeting to outline the likely areas of concern for the patrols. Although Carlisle compared favourably with other towns, patrol work was still needed to 'raise the moral standard'. Open spaces such as the area outside the Skating Rink and Carlisle Castle were to be patrolled every evening. Miss Hawksley also advocated starting a girls club. Such clubs had been started in other towns to which girls 'found idling' could be sent to. She suggested a 'mixed club for one or two nights a week'. To be effective, the work 'must be quiet, continuous and strictly regulated'. The intention was to provide data on women's needs for their 'protection, recreation and education'. Patrols were set up in the centre of Carlisle and in several working-class areas of the city.²⁵

The attempt to form a women's patrol group was obviously a co-ordinated attempt between a number of social reform organisations. The Church, too, added its voice to the clamour. In 1915 the Canon of Carlisle, Henry Rawnsley called for the introduction of women police in a letter to the Carlisle Journal. He wrote: 'I am persuaded that we really need the help of these trained women police not only in connection with our military camps but in all the difficult work to be done in our great cities'.²⁶ The Journal was prominent in publicising the campaign throughout 1915. It gave a detailed account of the national conference of the NUWW in London

²⁵ Ibid, January 25 meeting, 1916

²⁶ C.J. March 2 1915

where Mrs George Morgan urged the Government to use women police. Policemen, she claimed, did not know how to talk to the 'flighty girl'. In fact, the flighty girl knew a great deal better how to talk to a policeman. Publicity was also given to the visit of the NUWW national president, Mrs. Louise Creighton, the widow of the Bishop of London, who addressed the Carlisle branch on the need to set up women patrols, because 'girls', she noticed, 'were getting into mischief'.²⁷ The Carlisle branch of the British Women's Temperance Association welcomed the introduction of NUWW patrols in the area in February 1916. In December 1917 patrol leader Hetty Donald gave an account of her work to the local branch of the NUWW where she told the meeting: 'Loneliness was accountable for the downfall of most men and women. They needed warmth, comfort, talk and friendliness. Patrols made a bridge for the lonely ones to cross; they were the friends of the street and friendships there were carried into homes and clubs'.²⁸ The Chief Constable of Carlisle praised the patrols' work in his annual report for 1917: 'They work in couples, and their endeavour is to keep order by tactful remonstrance, or simply by their presence. They put girls in touch with persons and institutions working for their benefit..'. Complaints about young girls' 'undesirable conduct' had practically ceased since the patrols' introduction.²⁹ No doubt, the fact that voluntary patrols did not put pressure on police budgets and released male policemen for other work also contributed to the Chief Constable's glowing report. The Carlisle Journal also praised their efforts for 'keeping better order among the girls in the street'.³⁰

NUWW patrols policed the streets and parks in a number of towns - in Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, Ipswich, Letchworth, Newcastle, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Southampton. Mrs Sophia Stanley, the London Patrol Organiser, gave evidence in

²⁷ CJ, October 8 and November 5, 1915.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, February 11 & December 15, 1916.

²⁹ CRO, Chief Constable's annual report, 1917, PCC Vol. XXVIII, pp. 82-3.

³⁰ CJ, February 13, 1917

1918 that around 100 NUWW patrols operated throughout the country with 44 on duty in London.³¹ Edith Tancred, Director of the Scottish Training Schools, put the numbers at between 4-5,000 throughout the United Kingdom in a later account. Her estimate probably counts each pairing of policewomen as a separate patrol. In London the part-time patrols were paid by the Metropolitan Police and carried an authorisation card signed by the Commissioner.³² Their targets were often groups of young girls in public spaces. In March seven girls were warned about their behaviour in Epsom after loitering around soldiers. These females were obviously not prostitutes. 'They came from the outlying districts and did not mean any harm, but were behaving foolishly.' In Hammersmith the patrols noted 'a very large number of quite young girls of "the flapper type" throng Broadway until late at night'. The patrols cautioned 23 of them.³³

Public spaces where young girls were likely to meet were particularly checked. Pubs, music halls and cafes were watched to keep females under observation. Houses and hotels were observed where women were seen entering with men. One patrol spotted a woman known to them dressed as a nurse and going to a hotel with an officer. The couple were found in the bedroom, having falsely registered. Parks were also patrolled regularly. In Hyde Park in the summer of 1918 41 couples were spoken to 'for lying in suggestive attitudes'. At Hampstead Heath patrols found areas with long grasses were a particular favourite for courting couples: 'Many of the couples had to be looked for as the ferns were very high and they could not have been seen otherwise'.³⁴ Clearly the patrols took their work seriously in searching for cases of suspected immorality. How seriously they were taken by the public is another matter. Some patrols requested the presence of a policeman to visibly display their

³¹ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/139, memo on Women Police and Patrols, May and July 1918.

³² E. Tancred, *Women Police* (1951), p. 2.

³³ PRO, MFPO 2/1748, Reports of Work Done by Women Patrols, March 1918, Epsom and Hammersmith Divisions.

³⁴ *Ibid*, March, April & June reports, 1918 Hampstead Heath & Hyde Park reports, July & August 1918

legitimacy; for women patrols had no actual powers of arrest. A request from a patrol organiser for a constable to accompany women patrols 'to show that they are officially recognised' was turned down by the Superintendent of the Gypsy Hill Division in London in October 1916. Although the women were 'earnest workers and their supervision over young girls was 'beneficial', he thought their actions in moral policing were 'over-zealous' 'It is evidently their intention to interfere with couples if they consider their conduct suspicious. Many couples have not the least idea of behaving improperly and the Police would not think of interfering with them, if they were to their conduct would probably be complained of.' Having a policeman accompany them would give the impression 'the ladies were acting under Police authority, which, in my opinion, is undesirable'.³⁵ How far patrols were cautioning young women and couples to excess is a matter of conjecture, but suspicions of this might also be used by male police to undermine the idea of women in authority.

The Women's Police Service

The Women's Police Service and the NUWW patrols both attracted females sympathetic to the feminist cause. Bland sees both organisations as largely feminist, while Levine accepts that the leading lights could certainly be described as such but remains cautious about the rank and file.³⁶ Many of the original founders of the WPS were suffragettes who had been involved in direct action before the war.³⁷ Mary Allen, for example, had been imprisoned and force-fed in Holloway. Such women, to use Robert Carrier's phrase, became 'poachers turned game-keepers'.³⁸ The irony that these pre-war law-breakers were now law upholders was not lost on Mary Allen

³⁵ PRO, MEPO, 2/1710, Superintendent's Report, Gypsy Hill Division, October 20, 1916.

³⁶ L. Bland, 'In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War', in J. Brophy and C. Smart (eds), Women in Law (1984) P Levine, 'Walking the Streets'

³⁷ M. Allen, The Pioneer Policewoman, p. 12.

³⁸ R. Carrier, 'The Control of Women By Women: The Women Police', Society for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin No. 26, Spring 1973, p. 18

who remarked: 'During the various suffrage riots my relations with the police had been the reverse of amicable'. Allen, who had led a sheltered life and had been dogged by childhood illness, saw in the suffragette movement a chance for adventure.³⁹ Doubtless wartime police work offered a similar opportunity. In that sense Woollacott is right to draw the parallel between both women police and working-class girls roaming darkened streets and taking advantage of a new freedom.⁴⁰ Yet Allen's presence on the streets was, in her own mind, clearly more of a legitimate presence than the 'undesirable women' and 'idle boys and girls' she came across.⁴¹

The WPS began policing shortly after the outbreak of war. Like the NUWW patrols the WPS's first duties comprised patrolling public places. Funds were raised to send Allen and Miss E.F. Harburn, a London County Council school manager and girls club organiser, to Grantham where 18,000 troops were stationed, almost doubling the pre-war population. Allen was appalled at what she found there. 'Every facility for wrong-doing, with every temptation to take advantage of it, made the streets and public places particularly perilous for the young of both sexes.' Alleys, courts, yards, passages and pubs were checked by the two women. During the day they went into working-class homes in plain clothes to warn females of the dangers of going to the camps. Under Defence of the Realm regulations they had the right of entering any home within a six-mile radius of the Army Post Office. Working-class youngsters were particularly targeted because they had 'little defence against the evil effects of a wretched environment, or who rushed into danger through mere youthful love of pleasure or excitement'. At a later posting in Hull Allen found the working-class girls there 'sullen, hardened and defiant'. Allen acknowledged that such females were not prostitutes but simply 'wilful and pleasure-loving, in the habit of wasting their time

³⁹ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁰ A. Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever and Its Control', p. 336.

⁴¹ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, p. 18

strolling about'. They were 'a source of danger to themselves and to others'. In wartime badly lighted streets provided the opportunity of 'girls of 14 or even less, attempting to ply a nefarious trade with boys of the same age'. Working-class females with surplus cash to spend appeared to Allen to exacerbate the problem. Munitions workers 'had more money to spend than ever before in sensible or foolish ways. Even children were given well-paid work, and were in the street all day, and frequently far into the night'.⁴²

The WPS became increasingly involved in the regulation of munitions workers from April 1916. Allen and Damer Dawson went to see the Home Secretary Herbert Samuel in early 1916 about the possibility of extending their work to munitions areas. The problem of organising and supervising the behaviour of such females was clearly a topic of concern for the Government. In July 1916 the Police (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act made policewomen eligible to be paid half from the Treasury and half from the rates. In January 1917 an official agreement was drawn up whereby the WPS would receive a grant of £850, which was increased to £1,700 by January 1918.⁴³ The first government factories to be policed by the WPS were at Queensferry, Waltham Abbey, Pembrey and Gretna. The agreement to police the Gretna factory was dated October 31, 1916. From January 1917, after the initial trial period, the Ministry of Munitions agreed to pay 25s a week to train each recruit for a month plus first-class train fares. Once trained, policewomen received £2 a week, a sergeant £2 5s and an inspector £2 10s. Accommodation would be supplied 'at reasonable charges' and the WPS had to supply their own uniforms.⁴⁴ Although the task of supervising munitions workers was a formidable one for the WPS the attraction of public funding was paramount. Raising funds for such work was always a problem: WPS organisers were still talking of a 'financial crisis' in October 1918. Allen, too, admitted that performing

⁴² Ibid., pp. 31-3, 36, 45, 49-50, 79, 250-56.

⁴³ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, pp. 58-61.

⁴⁴ PRO, HO 45/10806/309485, Agreement between Ministry of Munitions and WPS, January, 1917

unpaid work for the Ministry of Munitions threatened to 'bring to a standstill' patrol work elsewhere.⁴⁵ Opening up the police service as a full-time career for women was the goal of the WPS. One of the organisation's leaflets makes this clear: 'It is hoped ultimately to obtain full official recognition, but until policewomen are incorporated into a department of the already existing police force the corps must remain dependant upon voluntary contributions'.⁴⁶ The NUWW patrols, however, were not keen to get involved in munitions work. Sophia Stanley thought patrolling at Woolwich was 'trivial work', involving checking to see whether cups and saucers had gone missing. The WPS certainly saw themselves as the more professional outfit: they designed their own military-style uniforms while NUWW patrols were content to wear armlets and head gear. The WPS dismissed the NUWW patrols as 'amateurs'. The WPS 'were trained to deal with our own cases without needing to call male constables,' whereas 'the women patrols are working as part-time assistants'.⁴⁷ Sophia Stanley perceived a further difference between the two organisations. The more suffragette-inclined WPS were openly trying to reform the police service while the NUWW thought that, on the whole, the existing police system was satisfactory. The WPS wanted powers of arrest while the NUWW only wanted this in special cases for experienced patrols. Stanley also claimed that many WPS members had transferred to the NUWW patrols because of dissatisfaction at WPS aims and methods. Mrs Carden, secretary of the NUWW Women's Patrol Committee, complained to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner that a press report had confused the women patrols with the WPS. She wrote: 'The Woman Patrol referred to is much perturbed at being classed with the Women Police'.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ IWM, Emp 43/78, WPS letter to subscribers, October 1918. M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, p. 60.

⁴⁶ IWM, Emp 43/38, WPS leaflet, 1916?

⁴⁷ PRO, MEPO 2/17109, Home Office report, May 25, 1918. IWM, Emp 43/94, WPS: Account of Work Accomplished 1916-17, p. 9

⁴⁸ PRO, Mun 5/93/346/139, Memo on Women Police and Women Patrols, June 26, 1918. MEPO 2/1710, Letter from Mrs Carden to Sir Edward Henry, September 22, 1916

The WPS contingency at Gretna was 167 at its peak in June 1918, the largest force of Women Police Service members in the country.⁴⁹ Inside the workplace the surveillance of relationships was also carried out, as on the streets. The maintenance of efficiency for production purposes was the paramount reason. According to Mary Allen, the WPS ensured that fraternisation between the sexes was kept to a minimum. 'Larking about might here lead to heavy loss of life if indulged in while the making of munitions was in progress'. Clamping down on coarse language was also attempted: 'The conversation among the workers had been frequently appallingly coarse, with young girls using the most profane language'.⁵⁰ Outside the factory the WPS policed the railways stations and also rode on the trains to ensure that 'women only' compartments were free of men. The factory stations were specifically built for transporting workers into Gretna and then on to the various works sections, so they were deemed to be private property. The WPS were therefore authorised to stop and interrogate anyone found there. Couples talking for any length of time on the stations were told to move on. If they argued they could be prosecuted. A labourer was found guilty of a breach of the peace at Gretna station in October 1916. A policewoman, after observing a couple talking for some time, approached the girl and told her to catch her train. The man took offence at this admonition and, according to the policewoman's evidence, used threatening language, saying he would not be dictated to by men police or women police. The policewoman subsequently left and returned with a male constable who arrested the labourer. In his defence the man said he was, in fact, the girl's fiancée who had plenty of time to catch her train. He denied threatening the policewoman and insisted he had merely 'disputed' with her. The man was offered the alternative of being fined £2 or five days' imprisonment: in effect the sentence was negligible because he had already been in jail for five days since his

⁴⁹ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, p. 61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* pp. 66 & 72-3

arrest.⁵¹ Possibly the case was brought to court as a deterrent to others, but clearly the intervention of the WPS in such situations caused resentment.

A New Sexual Identity?

The reaction of the aggrieved labourer at the intervention of the WPS was, not surprisingly, a cause of conflict. This was probably due to the inference that women seen talking to men had an ulterior motive or had a low moral standard. The NUWW patrols in Carlisle found that men did not 'understand the scope of the work: it was preventive, not rescue work'.⁵² The distinction must have escaped many working-class couples. Other cities were experiencing similar problems. Ministry of Munitions welfare officers reported that women patrols were 'not acceptable' in Newcastle. Voluntary workers were trying to organise patrols in the Scotswood area but 'it is expected there will be considerable opposition'. Mary Allen noted that 'stones, cat-calls and bad language' was often the response to the presence of the WPS.⁵³ In London in August 1918 an NUWW patrol was stopped by a working-class man, accompanied by 'a respectable looking woman'. He accused the patrol of interfering with his wife, who had been cautioned about her behaviour while simply waiting for her husband. To the NUWW patrol's relief it was discovered that it had been two WPS members who had cautioned her. The patrol shook hands with the couple and 'parted on friendly terms'.⁵⁴

Olive Taylor was a young munitions worker at Morecambe during the War. She also worked as a cook in the WAACs for a time. Her impressions of the women police were also far from favourable. 'What kind of woman could volunteer for such a

⁵¹ AO, October 20, 1916.

⁵² CR(), DSO 80/11, National Council of Women, Carlisle District reports 1914-18.

⁵³ PR() Mun 5/93/346/139 Memo on Women Police and Patrols, May 1918. M. Allen The Pioneer Policewoman p. 82

⁵⁴ PRO, MEPO 2/1748 Strand E Division report, August 1918

position we could not envisage. Naturally, we were prepared to hate them. Their main task was to try and catch us talking to a soldier or out after hours.' Taylor was chased by a policewoman for being out late after visiting her boyfriend, but managed to escape her. The policewoman issued a description following the incident but received no help from Taylor's fellow WAACs: 'The girls all knew, but no-one would help a policewoman'.⁵⁵ In an explosives factory at Pembrey, Gabrielle West found the same hostility to women police. West worked for the WPS in 1917 and recalled that 'for a policewoman to as much show herself was a signal for all the girls to shout rude remarks or worse'.⁵⁶ Taylor's remarks are significant because of her pre-war background. She lived on a Lincolnshire farm and felt socially isolated because 'the farmers and their wives never talked to the girls except to tell them what to do'. She knew little of the wider world, having no access to newspapers or books. Taylor was a sexual innocent. She began 'walking out' with a young man at 17 but had no physical contact of any kind with him. She volunteered for munitions work in 1916 and was sent to a factory at Morecambe before enlisting in the WAACs as a cook. In the munitions factory her eyes were opened to the world of sex. It was there she learned how babies were made. Her ignorance of such matters caused amusement among other munitions workers where she was nicknamed 'Molly-Never-Had-It'. In the WAACs she learned to be wary of sexual advances from soldiers, but that did not stop her from staying out late to meet her preferred male partner and dodging the policewomen on her way back to camp. Clearly the experience of the munitions factory had changed Taylor, not least in the gaining of sexual knowledge. Significantly, too, she saw the women police not as protectors from male sexual licence but as interferers in personal relationships.⁵⁷ Like many working-class females, Taylor wanted to use her own value judgements in relationships, not those of

⁵⁵ IWM, 83/17/1, 'Recollections of the Great War', by Miss O.M. Taylor.

⁵⁶ IWM, Dept. of Documents, 77/156/1, Diary of Miss G.M. West.

⁵⁷ IWM, 83/17/1, Miss O.M. Taylor.

the women police.⁵⁸ Historians have pointed to the lack of working-class children's sexual education from parents in the Edwardian period, leaving many in ignorance of the subject.⁵⁹ Olive Taylor's experiences tend to corroborate Diana Gittins' findings that single women going to occupations where they worked with other women could lead to more knowledge of sexual matters and also new values and new ideals.⁶⁰ In munitions factories in World War I, because this process gave experience of factory life to even greater numbers of females from other backgrounds, more were exposed to access to sexual knowledge. Females from more privileged backgrounds, too, were not immune to this effect. Lady Peggy Hamilton was struck by the amount of sexual banter among her fellow munitions workers and, like Taylor, was ribbed for her innocence in such matters: 'My puritanical upbringing had not prepared me for such talk' ⁶¹

Fashion, too, appeared to be suggesting a new acknowledgement of sexuality. The narrow skirt was replaced by a more comfortable and shorter flared design, in keeping with women's war work where more movement was necessary. The presence of advertisements aimed at munitions workers suggests that such females were worth targeting by the fashion trade. The Draper's Record reported that the cheapest class of drapery trader 'was having the time of his life' during the War. At the end of 1917 and into 1918 British clothes stores reported an unparalleled turnover of the finest lingerie.⁶² Even at work munitions workers modified the drab overalls by wearing flowers, brooches, pendants and handkerchiefs. Girls often wore stylish clothes to work, although they risked admonition or comments from welfare workers as to their suitability. Young workers did the same in other occupations. The manager of the

⁵⁸ S. Ouditt, 'Tommy's Sister: The Representation of Working Women's Experience', in H. Cecil & P. Liddle (eds), Facing Armageddon (1996), pp. 73-4.

⁵⁹ See, for example, C. Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian & Edwardian Britain (1981); P. Thompson, The Edwardians (1975); F. Roberts, A Woman's Place (1984); J. Gillis, For Better For Worse (Oxford), 1985.

⁶⁰ D. Gittins, Fair Sex, Family Size and Structure (1982), pp. 46, 79, 89-92.

⁶¹ P. Hamilton, Three Years Or the Duration: The Memoirs of a Munitions Worker 1914-18 (1978), p. 52.

⁶² Cited in M. Moss & A. Turton, Legend of Retailing: House of Fraser (1989), pp. 111 & 117.

London General Omnibus Company complained about girls customising uniforms by ripping off braid, wearing low cut blouses and shortening skirts. This was particularly annoying to company officials because skirt lengths had been scientifically determined to assess the correct length required for going up and down stairs. Such rational decision-making about the style of clothes obviously failed to impress some young conductresses.⁶³

Smoking in public, too, represented a new freedom for women. It is clear that munitions workers took up the habit in significant numbers. Complaints about smoking in hostels was made by a woman constable. Lady Cooter, president of the Tunbridge Wells Munitions Committee was appalled at this fashion. 'It is easy for girls to adopt a new luxury, a new expense, a new habit which is distasteful for many. I believe that smoking is likely to become as greater danger to women than men'.⁶⁴ WPS members also warned young females about smoking in public as well as admonishing 'highly painted teenagers' about their appearance.⁶⁵ Smoking at the Gretna factory was a continual source of concern to the authorities because of the danger of explosion. The WPS searched workers at entrance gates for cigarettes, matches or any potential combustible objects. Penalties were high: fines of £3 were common, but still the practice continued among both male and female workers. At the Pembrey factory Gabrielle West was asked by a female worker to retrieve her coat from inside the factory. Inside the coat was a pocket full of cigarettes. West wrote: 'Of course the poor wretch had to be prosecuted'.⁶⁶

Advertisers of cosmetics also targeted munitions workers, suggesting that the attention paid to personal appearance was a high priority. The Carlisle papers at this

⁶³ PRO LAB 5/1 Committee of Women in Industry, K10 evidence of Mary Macarthur and Mr H.C. Blain October 1918.

⁶⁴ MRC, MSS 243/14/23/4

⁶⁵ IWM, Lmp 43/94, WPS: Account of Work Accomplished 1916-17.

⁶⁶ See *CJ* May 1 and February 15 1917 and April 12, 1918 for examples of prosecutions. IWM 77/156/1 Diary of Miss G.M. West.

time are full of advertisements promoting ways of overcoming skin problems, fatigue and physical strain. Munitions workers were exhorted to eat Bird's Custard. The accompanying picture showed a young girl with a stick of rhubarb. Stewed rhubarb and custard 'refreshes the blood and reinvigorates the system'. An advertisement for Ven-Yusa skin cream promoted the product as producing 'a wonderfully refreshing effect which women war-workers will particularly appreciate. Ladies who use the preparation describe it as giving their skin "an oxygen bath," rejuvenating the tissues, clearing the complexion and imparting Nature's own youthful bloom to the face, neck and arms.' Application would bring 'a welcome freshness to complexions jaded by long hours of work in the close, dusty air of munitions factories'. Sunlight Soap adopted the idea of patriotism to sell their product. An illustration showed a female factory worker shaking hands with a soldier: 'Both have responded to their call of duty'. The advertisement boasted that nearly 3,000 Sunlight male workers had joined up and 'the girls who have taken their place in the ranks of industry are demonstrating to the world that heavy tasks can be done with light hands'. The makers of Oatine face cream told its customers: 'If you're helping in the buffet or canteen or work in the munitions factory and shell shop - all require long hours and heavy physical strain, so that the complexion soon begins to suffer and the hands become rough and coarse'. Tonics and medication were also advertised. An advertisement for Cockburn's nerve pills used a picture of a munitions worker to sell its product while buyers of Zam-buk were assured the product would cure ulcers, eczema and bad legs: 'It expels all poisonous matters'. Local stores also advertised women's clothing heavily.⁶⁷

Penny Summerfield has observed that in the Second World War fears of mass mobilisation meant that women of low morals would come into greater contact with more respectable females.⁶⁸ This appears to have been the case in the Great War, especially that the sexually experienced would corrupt the inexperienced. Opinion,

⁶⁷ *CL*, October 6, November 3, 1916, April 27, May 11, November 16, 1917, March 5 & 8, 1918.

⁶⁸ P. Summerfield *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 164

divided, however, on who was doing the corrupting. It was often assumed that the more worldly married women would have this effect on single girls. The problem was aired at a conference of welfare workers in Leeds in 1917, although one of those present thought that young girls straight from school were the culprits.⁶⁹ As shown above, Mary Allen was well aware of the 'coarse language' of some munitions workers and reprimanded them accordingly. This was unlikely to improve relationships between the two. Huntley and Palmer's biscuit factory in Reading converted to producing shells during the War and employed a woman patrol to police the munitions workers. The intention was 'to see that a nice grade of conduct permeates all the female workers, to check them if she sees any folly going on. . . . (she) tries to get in touch with them and to take a human interest in them'. Huntley's general manager, Hubert Pretty, was asked by the wartime Committee on Women in Industry whether the officer was popular. He answered: 'no'. Pretty thought it was the police uniform which antagonised the workers, but clearly, there were other reasons for their unpopularity.⁷⁰

Munitions Workers and Women Police: A Cultural Gap

The women police differed from munitions workers in a number of ways. Their class and age differences certainly brought them into conflict, as Woollacott points out.⁷¹ In the area of sexuality what is noticeable is the disparity in cultural assumptions between the two. There appears to have been a conflict between two discourses on sex: the first one from the older generation of social workers and women police was still heavily influenced by a late nineteenth century ideology that portrayed sex as problematic and dangerous. Walkowitz has pointed out the paradox of the legacy of first wave feminism which reinforced female subordination and sexual fear while

⁶⁹ MRC, MSS 97/1/EC/1/1, Institute of Personnel Management minute book: Welfare Workers conference, Leeds, August 2-6, 1917.

⁷⁰ PR(1) LAB 5/1 evidence of Mr H. Pretty to Committee on Women in Industry 152 December 4, 1918

⁷¹ A. Woollacott 'Khaki Fever and Its Control', p. 343.

opening up new social spaces for women to openly talk about the subject of sex. The effect of the social purity campaign may well have influenced working-class parents to severely restrict their daughters' social behaviour.⁷² In effect it marginalised the idea of female sexual identity. This obviously still held considerable currency in wartime where the 'danger' of sex was talked about incessantly leading to a breakdown in social order and in a lowering of morale of the armed forces. The second ideology, very much in competition with the first, was the discourse of commercial leisure which emphasised sexuality in a different way. Such an ideology encouraged a sexual identity in the form of the body, fashion, relationships and, importantly, mixed-sex socialising in new social spaces such as the cinema, shops and places of entertainment where women were encouraged to participate as consumers. It also challenged the ideology of the private sphere of the family as 'the privileged location of emotionality and love'.⁷³ In this struggle for dominance each attempted to adopt the image of respectability and the advocacy of more social space for women. The cinema industry, for example, was keen to display its respectability and patriotism during wartime to disarm its critics who saw in the new medium a frivolity and potential immorality that was likely to influence younger members of society in particular.⁷⁴

The generational and class disparity between munitions workers and women police is particularly noticeable. The WPS, for example, clearly saw themselves as moral and social superiors to working class females: they were 'women of social standing and education, mentally and physically above the average', in Mary Allen's words.⁷⁵ The Government, too, wanted such women to join the police groups as their role expanded into policing munitions workers. Isobel Goldingham, who ran the WPS

⁷² J. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992), p. 7. J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution & Victorian Society*, p252.

⁷³ J. Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society* (1989 edn.), p. 31.

⁷⁴ See Chapter 5.

⁷⁵ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, p. 9

administrative section, wrote to the Commandant-in-Chief of the Women's VAD's in February 1916 in her recruitment drive. The WPS 'were glad to welcome recruits', but of a certain class. 'The authorities are of the opinion that educated gentlewomen should be appointed to the professional posts now being operated in the provinces.'⁷⁶ The NUWW patrols also recruited from a similar background: housewives, professional and business women, teachers and social workers all joined in significant numbers.⁷⁷ By 1919 1,080 women had been trained by the WPS. Around 40 per cent of them had private means. Of those who had worked before, 167 were 'certificated' women, 130 came from nursing backgrounds, 75 were teachers, 34 had office experience and 59 business experience. A further 10 were described as 'motor drivers', which suggests a background that gave them access to a car and the ability to drive it. Thus 885 of the WPS came from such backgrounds. When Gabrielle West joined the WPS she noted that most recruits were 'ladies, a much better class, in fact quite a different class to a p.(oliceman)'.⁷⁸ A small proportion appear to have been from a less privileged background, including 13 shop assistants, 28 dressmakers, nine land workers, six doctors'/chemists' assistants and 28 munitions workers. Additionally, 110 had previously been domestic servants. Class composition may have broadened when the WPS expanded in order to supply women police for munitions work.

Women police were also significantly older than most munitions workers. Women up to 45 and sometimes older were accepted with the preferred average age between 25 and 30. The WPS's official qualifying age range was between 25 and 38. Similarly, the NUWW patrols looked 'for women of tact and experience, between 30 and 40 years of age'.⁷⁹ Munitions workers, especially those at Gretna, were predominantly young, single and working-class with different cultural assumptions.

⁷⁶ IWM, Emp 43/32, letter from Isobel Goldingham to Charles Furse, February 23, 1916.

⁷⁷ E. Taucied, *Women Police*, p. 2.

⁷⁸ IWM, 77/156/1, Diary of Miss G.M. West. IWM, Emp 43/84.

⁷⁹ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, p. 43. IWM, Emp 43/83 & 42.4/2.

The previous three chapters have demonstrated that Gretna munitions workers were particularly prone to making use of commercial leisure outlets in the area; both those provided by private entrepreneurs and those supplied by the Ministry of Munitions. Cinemas, pubs and dances were very popular as opportunities for socialising for young females increased in the area.⁸⁰ What is noticeable is that where young workers congregated is where women police groups operated. Additionally, however, what young workers were enjoying was often viewed with suspicion by those doing the policing. The cinema is a prime example. The 1917 report of the National Council for Public Morals had stressed the cinema as a site of sexual danger where indecency and improper conduct was likely to occur. The 'moral danger of darkness' in cinemas where people 'of a low standard of morality' congregated raised particular fears.⁸¹ The women police also shared these concerns. One NUWW member gave evidence to the NCPM inquiry that she thought Charlie Chaplin films were 'vulgar and suggestive to evil'.⁸² This view was certainly not shared by many working-class audiences: probably the depiction of poverty, the use of working-class locations and the irreverent attitude to authority displayed in Chaplin films inclined her to this view. Mary Allen, also, was dismissive of the new medium. The WPS checked cinemas and pubs to stop 'frivolous young girls from getting into mischief'. Its effect on young people in particular disturbed Allen 'There is no law to prevent a child seeing on the screen vulgar brawls, or the most horrible, obscene representations of dramas ostensibly carried on in the lowest surroundings'. Such films encouraged them to be 'aroused to breathless excitement. They shout with fear and terror and dance about in their places'. This appears to be a classic instance of the misunderstanding of working-class culture by which the idea of noise is associated with social disorder. Far from signifying frightened children, the noise indicated great

⁸⁰ See Chapters 4, 5 and 6

⁸¹ National Council for Public Morals *The Cinema - Its Present Position & Future Possibilities* (1917), pp. xxx-xxvi

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 11

enjoyment. Allen thought that portrayals of on-screen passion were likely to be imitated. She disliked American films the most: yet these were the most popular with working-class audiences. Allen thought that the consequence of such films was that most of the audience would be 'over-sexed'.⁸³ In Carlisle the NUWW patrols also concerned themselves with the monitoring of films. Unsurprisingly, 'several objectionable ones' were reported to have been shown.⁸⁴ In Grantham WPS officer Edith Smith introduced a blacklist for girls who she thought were behaving inappropriately in cinemas. Those who had been cautioned several times were refused admission. They were subsequently taken off the list if their behaviour improved.⁸⁵

It is not surprising, therefore, that, as shown in the previous chapter, so much attention was paid by both the Ministry of Munitions and the various social reform organisations to organise 'sensible' recreation for munitions workers. But whether this actually inhibited the opportunity for mixed-sex socialising is debatable. On the contrary it probably increased opportunities. Mixed dances at Ministry of Munitions hostels could cause problems and 'difficulties'. At one hostel concern was expressed at 'maintaining a proper standard of behaviour on guest nights'. At another hostel 'men show some disposition to get out of hand on guest nights'.⁸⁶

Not only were munitions workers frequenting the cinema and pubs and dances in large numbers, but other social outlets were proving popular. In Carlisle ice-cream shops were popular venues for teenagers to meet. The city boasted six such outlets by 1917. One such shop fell foul of the DORA regulations by selling ice-cream after 8pm, for only meals were allowed to be sold after that time. Owners Peter Adriani and Raffaels Turrichu were each fined £2 for the offence. In court it was stated that 'the number of youths and girls that visited these shops gave a good deal of trouble to

⁸³ M. Allen, *The Pioneer Policewoman*, pp. 36, 257-261.

⁸⁴ CRO, DSO 80/11, Carlisle district NUWW patrols meeting, January 5, 1917.

⁸⁵ IWM, Emp 43/7, Edith Smith's report of work in Grantham, 1916.

⁸⁶ PRO, Mun 5/92/346/40, Ministry of Munitions reports on Hostels, 1918

the police and there was often disorder'. Between 30 and 40 were in the shop when the police visited it and it was found to be still packed when the policeman returned after 9pm. At another ice-cream shop over 100 customers were on the premises.⁸⁷ The case appears to have been brought to act as a deterrent because the presence of teenagers out late on the streets was seen as adding to the difficulties of maintaining public order in the area, and not least in the problem of upholding moral standards.

In March 1918 the Carlisle Journal gave prominence to a case which appeared to emphasise the moral danger abroad in the Gretna area for young munitions workers. A 46-year-old coal depot foreman at the munitions factory was jailed for a year for bigamy. He had married a 20-year-old hostel maid: the couple had lived together as man and wife in Dumfries for two years before the marriage. The girl 'was a very respectable girl of a very respectable family'. In his defence the man said that he had been told that his wife had died in 1917 and had written to her last address to make sure. The letter had come back marked 'not known at this address'. Whatever the exact circumstances of the relationship between the couple and the degree of deception perpetrated by the man, it is perhaps as significant that the headline 'Bigamy at Gretna' suggested the link between the factory and immorality.⁸⁸ Factory officials seem to have been well aware of such assertions. When the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease wrote to the Ministry of Munitions Welfare section asking for lectures on the subject to be introduced at factories, the Ministry adopted a very defensive attitude. Providing facilities for such lectures was not one with which it could possibly be associated. Ministry officials thought that the subject could be included in a series of health lectures, but not given individual prominence. They concluded that: 'It would be extremely unwise to select this particular subject for propaganda purposes or to single out munitions workers for the purpose.'⁸⁹ Part of this

⁸⁷ CJ, March 27, 1917.

⁸⁸ CJ, March 22 1918.

⁸⁹ PRO, 5/93/346/141, Welfare Advisory Committee minutes, 1918

reluctance to openly promote sexual education appears to have been that it would acknowledge that munitions workers were sexually active females, and this was not a role that could be encompassed in wartime propaganda about women on the home front. Less publicly, munitions welfare officers did involve themselves in dealing with sexual relationships. Up to April 1919 the Ministry of Munitions dealt with 1,232 welfare cases. Many of these were cases of sickness or problems relating to work, lodgings or financial difficulties. However, seventeen cases of females suffering venereal disease are recorded while 171 unmarried mothers were helped. A further eighteen required 'moral help'.⁹⁰ Two of the cases involving unmarried mothers give some clue as to how welfare officers dealt with such cases. One involved a pregnant 23-year-old living in lodgings in Coventry. The father of the baby was 18 and his mother had refused to let him marry. The landlady had thrown her out on hearing of the pregnancy and the woman was taken to the Union workhouse where the baby was born. The welfare officer subsequently found work for her and new lodgings. In another case a 20-year-old became pregnant by a married man who had left for Canada. The girl refused to give the man's address or ask for his help. The welfare officer arranged for the girl to go to a night shelter and found her a job as a domestic servant. Possibly this was done to take her out of the factory environment where she would probably have been classified as a bad influence on other factory workers. She would certainly have been more isolated as a servant.⁹¹

Such cases appeared to confirm that munitions workers were in particular 'moral danger' The WPS and NUWW patrols certainly thought so. They were not alone in this concern. The YWCA also focused their attention on munitions workers. The YWCA Review of 1918 noted that providing hostel accommodation was designed to counter 'the street problem'. Women police patrols brought young females stranded at night or those deemed to be in danger to such hostels. Providing hostel

⁹⁰ PRO: Mun 18/9/9 Ministry of Munitions list of cases helped by welfare officers

⁹¹ PRO: Mun 18/9/10. Maternity cases involving welfare officers.

accommodation had been introduced before 1914 but wartime circumstances had produced an exceptional situation. Now questions of social order and national efficiency took on an even greater urgency. The Review commented: 'These girls are asking yet more of us both for their own sakes as well as for the sake of public morality and the future of the race'. By February 1919, when the YWCA Munitions Workers Welfare Committee was dissolved, 101 centres for young females had been opened throughout the country. The YWCA Review for 1917 noted that 'on no class of the community has the physical strain of war told more heavily than on the female munitions workers, mere children some of them, of 14 and 15'. The YWCA also shared concerns about the association between the cinema and immorality. Its Cinema Recreative Circle aimed 'to bring a strong influence to bear upon the cleansing of the Cinema and its utilisation as a moral and educational force'.⁹²

Like the WPS and NUWW patrols, the YWCA also found that policing morality also posed problems in that working-class reaction to these attempts was often antagonistic. As the NUWW patrols in Carlisle found out 'preventive work' was not always understood. The YWCA's aim was to save females 'from the dangers of the time and to make them a positive power for purity and temperance among the womanhood of the nation'. However, the YWCA also noted: 'It is important that this should be done without casting unnecessary reflections either upon the men or the girls'. The 'problem' was the appearance of young females on the street in wartime. A League of Honour handbill presented the dilemma in the following way: 'Many a man has to be kept good by thinking of the good straight girl he knows at home who expects him to be good and straight. He is fighting for us women and our homes. Give him something good and true to think about. Don't let your excitement make you silly and lead you to wander aimlessly about'. Thus such girls were both potential victims of sexual predators but also potential tempters of men, and particularly the armed forces. Mrs Creighton, vice-president of the League of Honour and also a leading light

⁹² MRC, MSS 243/2/1/5, YWCA Review August 1914-January 1920 MSS 243/2/1/3/1, YWCA Review (1917), p. 16 MSS 243/2/1/4, YWCA Review (1918), pp. 5-6. MSS 243/8/12, Our Outlook (1918), p. 159.

of the NUWW, exhorted English women thus: 'Let women unite one and all to see that no temptations are put in the way of soldiers and recruits'.⁹³

Conclusion

Social reformers, feminists and government officials all attempted to regulate and intervene in the public behaviour of young working-class women during wartime. The policing of such females was regarded as 'a problem'. Women police groups saw themselves as stand-in parents, assuming the authority to regulate, protect and educate working-class girls about their public behaviour. It seems apparent that many working-class girls did not recognise this authority, nor did they see their public behaviour as a problem. The direct intervention of the women police also contained a suggestion that moral standards could only be maintained by women of a higher status. Young munitions workers were attempting to create social spaces for more mixed-sex socialising through the cinema and places of public entertainment, as Chapters 4 and 5 suggest. Looking different and acting in different ways from older members of their sex confirmed a generational divide as well as a class divide. While organisations such as the WPS, NUWW and YWCA hoped to limit opportunities for fraternisation between the sexes, many young munitions workers were seeking the very opposite. The 'problem' of young munitions workers was largely one of their public visibility.

⁹³ MRC, MSS 243/64/6/1, YWCA Central Committee for Work Among Girls in Military Centres, MSS 243/64/53, League of Honour Handbill 'Girls in Wartime' MSS 243/64/41, 'To the Women and Girls of England' by Mrs Louise Creighton

Conclusion

The Armistice quickly signalled an end to this 'strange wartime adventure' for thousands of young munitions workers.¹ According to Braybon and Summerfield, demobilisation was swiftly followed by women being pushed off the unemployment register or being forced to return to low-paid pre-war work, particularly in domestic service and laundry work.² Munitions workers were interviewed to ascertain their pre-war employment record and these details were forwarded to labour exchanges. Government agencies advised National factories not to dismiss large numbers at the same time as this could lead to 'serious unrest.' Two weeks' wages plus a bonus were given in lieu of notice to those willing to leave immediately. Some workers were kept on for cleaning and general repair work for a few months. Women workers were targeted for land work or employment with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), while the attractions of emigration were also advocated.³ At Gretna demobilisation began on December 6, 1918, less than a month after the Armistice. However, from early 1918 workforce numbers had already been reduced, as had other munitions factories by this date. The 6,000-strong cordite section at Gretna was reduced by 2,000 by May 1918.⁴ Keeping workers off the unemployment benefit register was given high priority. Trade union officials such as Mary Macarthur complained that women dismissed from munitions work were being denied benefit if they refused to join the WAAC.⁵ Gretna officials launched an extensive recruitment

¹ The phrase is used in I. K. Yates' *The Woman's Part*, p64

² Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage*, pp120-1. See also Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, Chapter 9, and Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp105-117

³ PRO, Mun 4/1741, Future Use of Killing Factories: Report on Demobilisation, December 14, 1918, pp1-3.

⁴ PRO, Mun 5/100/350/18, Report on Demobilisation of women at Gretna.

⁵ PRO, Mun 5/52/300/780, Women's Trade Union Advisory Cttee, November 7, 1917 - March 19, 1919

campaign for the WAAC, distributing 1,000 handbills, holding talks and showing Government films on the service. Despite such campaigns, WAAC work was not popular as wages were low. Cooks earned £24 a year, for example. Only 65 Gretna workers applied for the posts. Other recruitment campaigns at the factory attempted to steer workers back into mainly pre-war roles. Jobs were advertised for landwork, in army and navy canteens and hospitals, in domestic service, hosiery, weaving, tailoring and laundry work.⁶

Gretna retained a skeleton staff for a few months, largely drawn from those girls who had proved trustworthy. Emily Hubble, who had been promoted after attempting to stem an acid leak, and her friend Emily Davies, were kept on to clean tanks for a while. Others did go back to pre-war work at pre-war wages. Nina Cooper returned to Sunderland and went back to domestic service at 7s a week, after earning between £2 and £3 a week at Gretna. 'That was all there was for a girl. I went to a dairy serving milk and helping in the house.' Her pre-war job was in domestic service, earning 6s a week. Emily Hubble also went back to the North-East. She had never worked before the War and did not work afterwards. Instead she returned home and married her boyfriend soldier. When interviewed in the 1970s she explained her war work in terms of a temporary situation that disrupted normal life, but did not radically alter it. 'We just came back and fell into place the same as if we had never been away.' For Nina Cooper, too, normality meant a return to pre-war wages in domestic service.⁷

Thousands of migrant workers by the beginning of 1919 also left Gretna to return to normality. Doubtless it was more acceptable for migrant workers to be dismissed in large numbers because it was less likely to cause ill-feeling among the local population. For many, however, it must have been a relief to do so. Work at Gretna was taxing, demanding intense periods of concentration or requiring long bouts of

⁶ PRO, Mun 5/100/350/18.

⁷ Liddle Archive Item 4, Tapes 303 & 306, Item 8 Interviews with Emily Hubble, Emily Davies & Nina Cooper

physical effort. It was also extremely hazardous. A limited degree of social mobility could be achieved by those adopting responsible attitudes to work, like Emily Hubble. For most workers, however, class identities probably changed little. Also, attitudes to female workers at Gretna were shaped by pre-war cultural assumptions, not least because of their age. They were regarded largely as a problem workforce, needing special arrangements and supervision inside and outside the workplace. Edward Cadbury described young female workers as 'big children' in 1906. Their age was viewed as a particular problem for 'all classes of girls are apt to give trouble'. Cadbury saw one of the major problems of factory life as keeping order among girls.⁸ Judging from attitudes expressed by factory officials and welfare supervisors about Gretna workers, such concerns had not changed during wartime. Indeed, wartime conditions amplified this concern over the regulation of young people. They may have been feted as responsible patriotic workers in Government propaganda, but it is clear that at the same time the irresponsibility of youth and their potential to cause social disruption was what really concerned their elders. Anxieties were expressed over how young girls would behave in public, how they would spend their leisure time and whether they would spend sensibly or not. Additionally, *many were considered too* immature to live unsupervised. Such fears were expressed by social reformers, trade unionists and government departments. At Gretna, where the great majority of workers were under 20, supervision of workers' lives was all-encompassing. Opportunities to gain any degree of autonomy were extremely limited in the workplace, at least. Here it is hard to see females as 'symbols of modernity', to use Woollacott's phrase.⁹

This does not mean, however, that young munitions workers' lives did not change during the War. It is largely outside the workplace that one must look for change. New work identities did seem to modify existing cultural identities. Girls from

⁸ E. Cadbury, M.C. Matheson & G. Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, 1906, p205.

⁹ A. Woollacott, *On Her 'Their Lives Depend'*, p3

different regional backgrounds went out together socialising among themselves in pubs, at the cinema and at cafes. What brought them together was not merely gender and class identities, but also because they were of the same generation. The evidence of young workers from the North-East from the Liddle Archive suggests that, after initial mutual suspicion, or even open hostility, regional and ethnic differences could be put aside. Additionally, in areas like Gretna and Carlisle, it appears to have been more culturally acceptable to go to the cinema or frequent the model taverns. The fact that cinema audiences dwindled in the North-East while in munitions areas such as Gretna they dramatically increased tends to suggest this. Similarly, girls from areas where female public drinking was unacceptable may have had a greater chance to frequent pubs - not to engage in heavy drinking, but to socialise. The example of Carlisle suggests that some did take this opportunity until local pressure forced the CCB to impose a ban on under-18s buying alcohol.¹⁰ This may well have been a problem of maintaining social order rather than a problem of drunkenness.

The popularity of films dealing with social relationships, and young workers' presence at dances and pubs also suggests there may have been a form of youth culture relating to munitions work. It is possible to see the popularity of football as a sport for young females in similar fashion. In all three instances it comprised activities that could earn the disapproval of sections of adult society - a very real criterion for any youthful fashion. The cinema trade had identified such a trend by targeting Pearl White films, songs and fashions at young females. This would have made little sense unless there was an existing youth audience which could identify with such a campaign. The success of such marketing suggests that this was indeed the case. A contemporary article also noted young munitions workers' predilection for commercial leisure outlets. Written by 'A Lady Worker', and probably someone of a different class and generation to those she described, the article acknowledges the very real sense of attachment to a commercial culture, while suggesting a degree of

¹⁰ See Chapters 5 & 6

regret that working-class girls had not been provided with greater access to more 'serious' cultural habits :

'Answering the strident challenges of the town they live in they go to rinks and cinemas, they read and chatter, kiss and quarrel and follow new fashions and new ideas As far as the cinema and ha'penny press can make them so, they are up to date: in that measure of life afforded to them they are alive.' ¹¹

Andrew Davies' assertion that a youth culture existed long before the 1950s, therefore, does find echoes in such wartime leisure cultures of young munitions workers. Additionally, the evidence in this thesis suggests that concerns about the leisure habits of teenagers pre-date those expressed in the interwar period and in the second half of the twentieth century. ¹²

Young migrant workers at Gretna were never really integrated into the local community. They were always seen as a temporary wartime phenomenon - in the way that adolescence was seen as a temporary phase in life. This may have reinforced their separate identities as munitions workers. Additionally, attending different leisure venues such as the model taverns and cinemas may also have increased this separateness from the local population. Many in the local community may have viewed them as preferable to the migrant male construction workers, but they were still often seen as being capable of upsetting some local, adult sensibilities, as the complaints from the Rev. Peebles, noted in Chapter 7, illustrate. Wartime, in effect, magnified the pre-war problem of youth. The public visibility of young female workers, often boisterous and in high spirits, may have added to the impression that

¹¹ 'Behind the Firing Line: Some Experiences in a Munitions Factory', by A Lady Worker, *Blackwoods Magazine*, February 1916, p196.

¹² A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, 1992. See also D. Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Workers in Interwar Britain*, 1995. C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60*, Manchester, 2000.

social stability was under attack. Additionally, the carefree manner of youth did not fit easily alongside the sombre atmosphere of war.

The State puts a high premium on social cohesion during wartime in order to maintain morale on the home front. Because the State became involved in the directing of migrant workers to munitions areas, many social reformers expected the State to accept responsibility for their welfare.¹³ State intervention in this area could help to maintain social stability by offering a reassurance that, in the case of female munitions workers, gender roles were not being transformed. This appears to be part of the rationale behind the provision of welfare and recreation at Gretna. Classes in cookery and needlework, for example, were designed to instruct girls in their roles as future mothers. This mothering identity, as Grayzel argues, was consistently stressed for the sake of national unity.¹⁴ It also reinforced the idea that munitions workers were temporary workers - Gretna was referred to as a 'war emergency community' to underline this assumption.¹⁵ Because wartime provided the potential for social upheaval, commentators were keen to stress continuities with the past. L.K. Yates thus attempted to reassure contemporaries that although young female migrant workers at Gretna were living away from their natural families, life there 'approximates to that of a large family.'¹⁶ Thus, young girls at Gretna were supervised in every aspect of their lives by women from an older generation. Welfare supervisors, social workers, hostel matrons and women police were constantly at hand to protect, guide and admonish young workers. They often saw themselves as stand-in parents. Some, like Cecile Matheson, thought that working-class parents would appreciate this role as protectors of their children and doubtless there were those who did.¹⁷ However, because middle-class women performed this role, it carried an

¹³ D. Proud, Welfare Work, 1916, p119.

¹⁴ S. Grayzel, Women's Identities at War, 1999, Chapter 3.

¹⁵ CN, July 28, 1916, 'Timber Town: A Happy Community of Girls'

¹⁶ L.K. Yates, The Woman's Part, 1918, p59.

¹⁷ C. Matheson, 'Welfare Work: Another View', Women's Industrial News, July 1917, p9.

underlying assumption that working-class families were often deficient in maintaining proper moral standards. The authority of such women rested on their class position and that they came from a different generation. Some social reformers saw the War as a chance to alter working-class cultural habits. The evidence presented in this thesis tends to indicate that the potential for conflict between young workers and middle-class women was at its highest when welfare supervisors and women police attempted to regulate public behaviour outside the factory.

Efforts to steer young workers towards rational recreation schemes was only partially successful. Again, such attempts carried assumptions that working-class girls were incapable of making rational choices themselves. Bible classes, gymnastic sessions and amateur dramatics, however, had little chance of competing with commercial leisure outlets. Ministry of Munitions officials recognised this and attempted to provide their own sanitised versions of the pub, the cinema and the dancehall. These were only partially successful. Austere in design and often producing a sombre atmosphere, state-run recreation was a deadly serious affair. It is little wonder that young workers in particular flocked to commercial cinemas in Annan and Carlisle where the atmosphere was less inhibiting and where they were less liable to be lectured at. In that sense, many female munitions workers displayed the same antipathy towards attempts to reform popular culture as male workers.¹⁸

Although Gretna's young female munitions workers performed adult working roles, and actually produced the explosives that helped Britain to win the War, they were in effect largely undervalued in society. Regarded as assets of the nation in their gender roles as future mothers, they were seen as worthy of protection and education. Outside of this role, however, they were often seen as a problem of organisation and regulation. As Gabrielle West found, in her dealings with munitions workers at

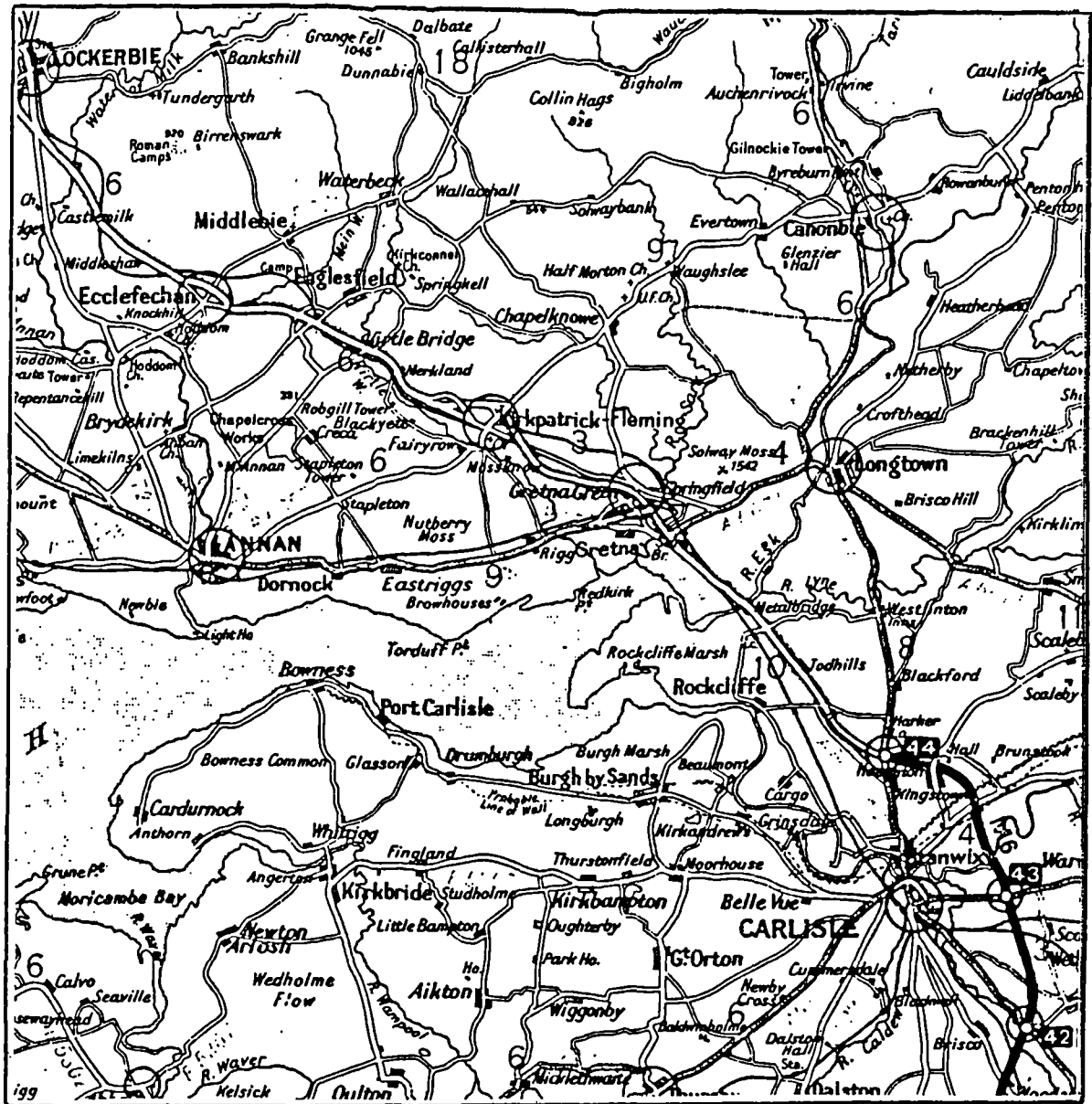
¹⁸ For working-class resistance to the development of alternatives to mass culture, see, for example, C. Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture 1884-1914*, Stanford, California, 1990. S G Jones, *Workers at Play*, 1986

Pembrey, some working-class girls were slow to show deference.¹⁹ This could be explained in terms of class assertiveness as a common identity of munitions workers made some girls more confident in their relationships with women of a higher status. Lack of deference, however, was also a sign of youthful rebellion. Class and gender clearly matter when focusing on the lives of female munitions workers. It should not be forgotten, however, that the age of so many of these workers was an important factor that constituted a significant part of their wartime identities and experience.

¹⁹ See p237

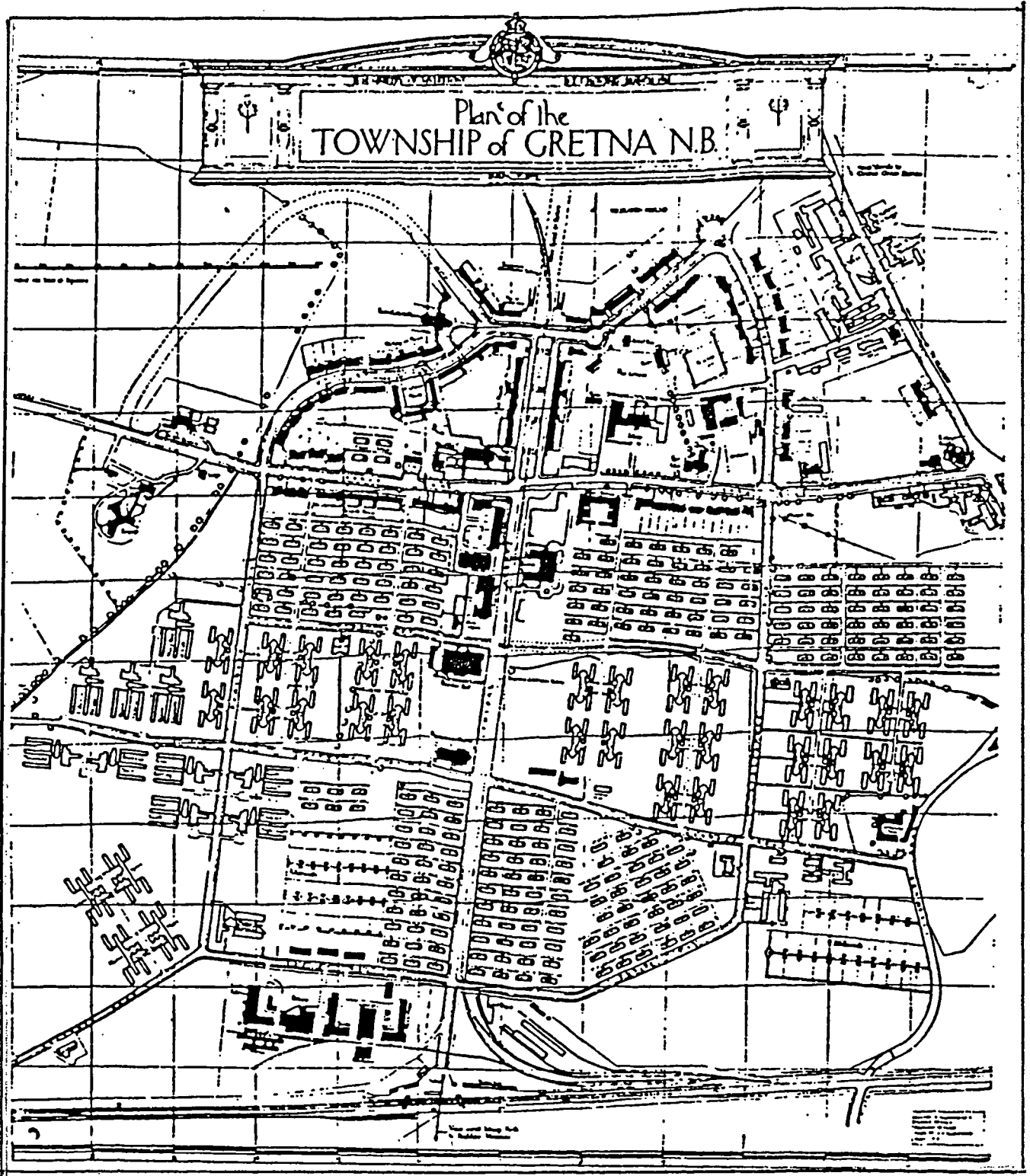
APPENDIX

(i)



of South-West Scotland and Cumberland. Carlisle (bottom right) is only eight
 due south from the eastern end of the Gretna factory, at Longtown, on the
 ish side of the border. Moving westwards, the factory area ended on the Scottish
 at Dornock, close to Annan.

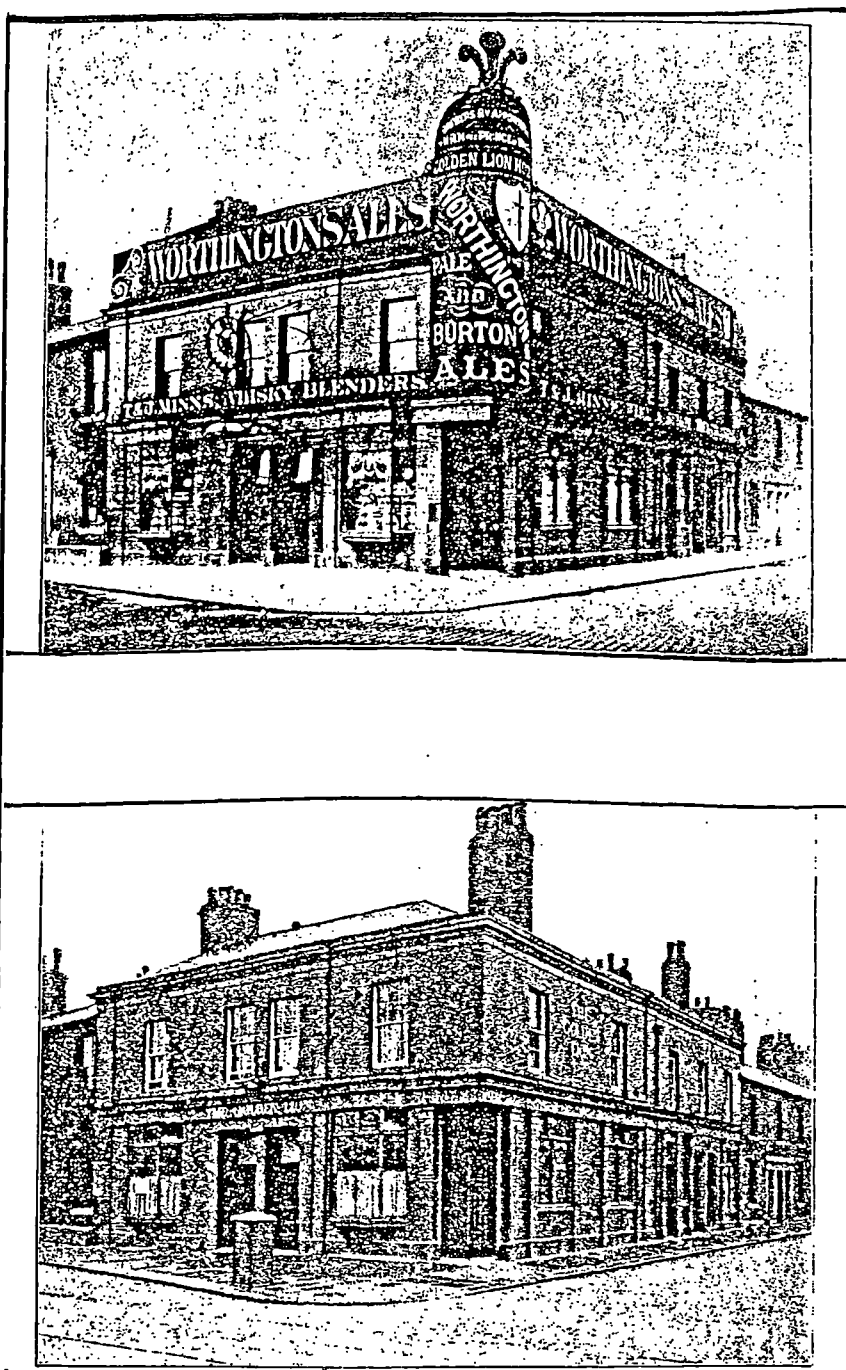
(iii)



Plan of the township of Gretna. The permanent buildings are shown in black, while the lighter buildings are the temporary hostels for the single, female workers. Source:

Dumfries Library.

(iv)

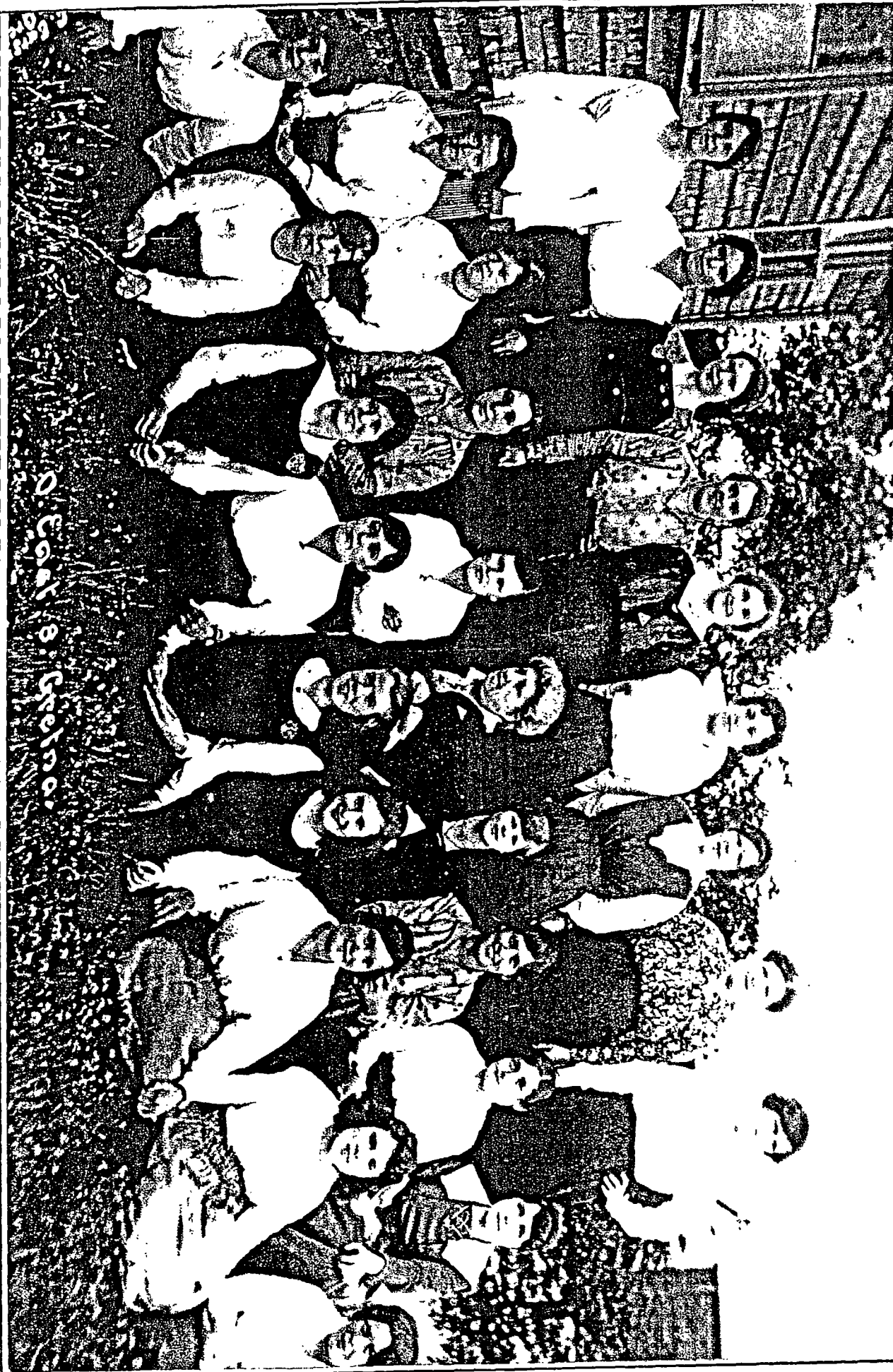


The changing face of the pub under Direct Control. The Golden Lion in Carlisle before acquisition by the Central Control Board (top picture) and afterwards (bottom picture). Note that even the windows are free of advertising. Source: Rowntree and Sherwell, *State Purchase of the Liquor Trade*, 1919.



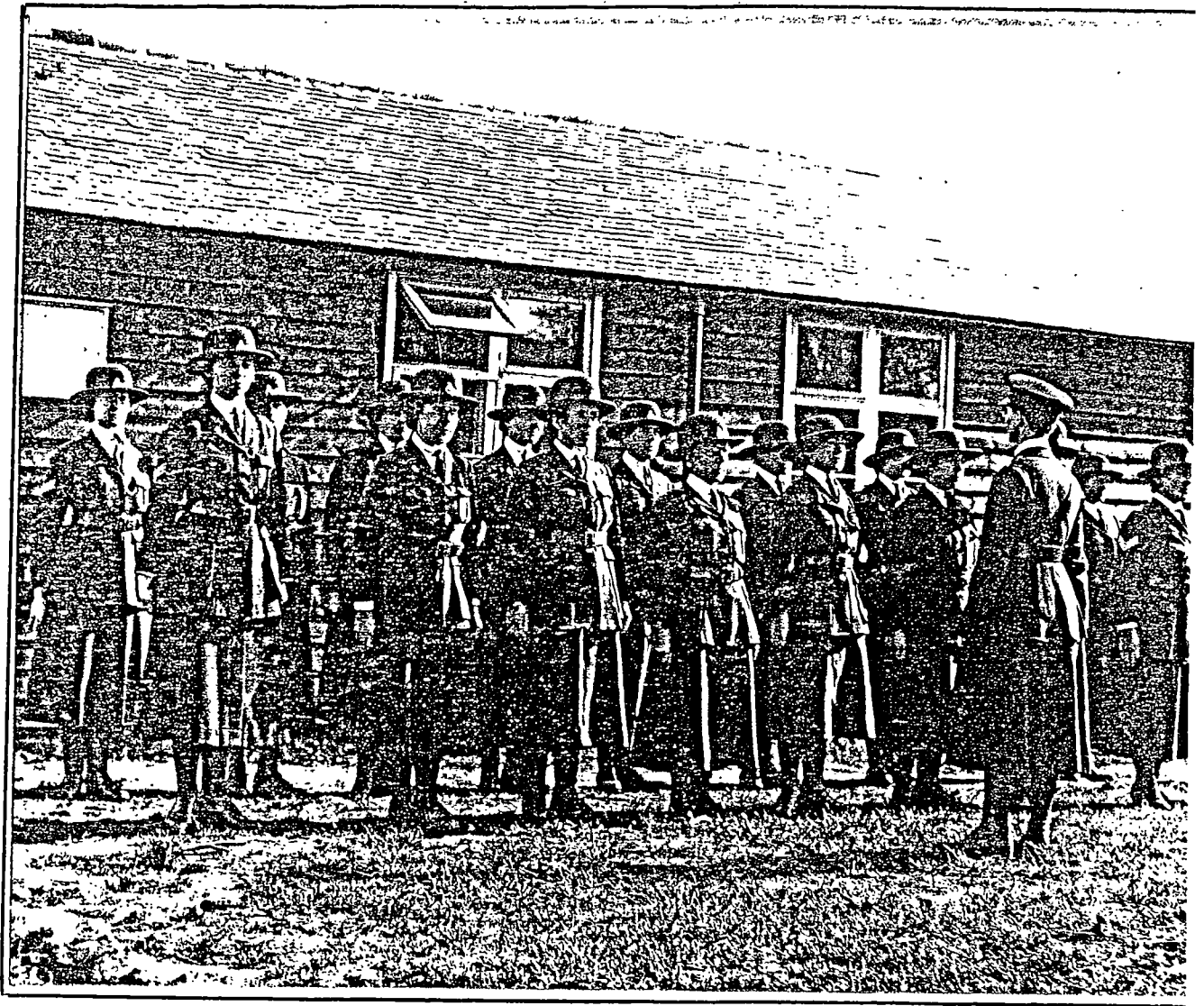
A good war? Cartoons from a factory publication, parodying the idea of high-spending munitions workers. The top picture shows a munitions worker arriving at Gretna, while the bottom picture shows her laden down with shopping on demobilisation. She has also acquired a servant. Source: Dornock Souvenir Magazine, 1919.

(vi)



A group of Gretna workers outside their wooden hostel, with the matron in the centre. The young age of many of the girls is quite apparent. Source: Dumfries library

(vii)



Members of the Women Police Service outside their barracks at Gretna. Note the military-style uniform. Source: Imperial War Museum, Department of Photographs, Q30578.

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